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KENILWORTH.

Amy Robsart.

Published by Ticknor and Fields Boston, 1855.

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WAVERLEY NOVELS.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

KENILWORTH.

I.

BOSTON:
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KENILWORTH.

No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?
THE CRITIC

INTRODUCTION—(1831.)

A CERTAIN degree of success, real or supposed, in the delineation of Queen Mary, naturally induced the author to attempt something similar respecting "her sister and her foe," the celebrated Elizabeth. He will not, however, pretend to have approached the task with the same feelings; for the candid Robertson himself confesses having felt the prejudices with which a Scotsman is tempted to regard the subject; and what so liberal a historian avows, a poor romance-writer dares not disown. But he hopes the influence of a prejudice, almost as natural to him as his native air, will not be found to have greatly affected the sketch he has attempted of England's Elizabeth. I have endeavoured to describe her as at once a high-minded sovereign, and a female of passionate feelings, hesitating betwixt the sense of her rank and the duty she owed her subjects on the one hand, and on the other, her attachment to a nobleman, who, in external qualifications at least, amply merited her favour. The

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interest of the story is thrown upon that period when the sudden death of the first Countess of Leicester, seemed to open to the ambition of her husband the opportunity of sharing the crown of his sovereign.

It is possible that slander, which very seldom favours the memories of persons in exalted stations, may have blackened the character of Leicester with darker shades than really belonged to it. But the almost general voice of the times attached the most foul suspicions to the death of the unfortunate Countess, more especially as it took place so very opportunely for the indulgence of her lover's ambition. If we can trust Ashmole's Antiquities of Berkshire, there was but too much ground for the traditions which charge Leicester with the murder of his wife. In the following extract of the passage, the reader will find the authority I had for the story of the romance :—

"At the west end of the church are the ruins of a manor, anciently belonging (as a cell or place of removal, as some report) to the monks of Abington. At the Dissolution, the said manor, or lordship, was conveyed to one —— Owen, (I believe,) the possessor of Godstow then.

"In the hall, over the chimney, I find Abington arms cut in stone, viz., a patonee between four martletts; and also another escutcheon, viz., a lion rampant, and several mitres cut in stone about the house. There is also in the said house, a chamber called Dudley's chamber, where the Earl of Leicester's wife was murdered; of which this is the story following :—

"Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a very goodly personage, and singularly well featured, being a great favourite to Queen Elizabeth, it was thought, and com-

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monly reported, that had he been a bachelor or widower, the Queen would have made him her husband; to this end, to free himself of all obstacles, he commands, or perhaps, with fair flattering entreaties, desires his wife to repose herself here at his servant Anthony Forster's house, who then lived in the aforesaid manor-house; and also prescribed to Sir Richard Varney, (a prompter to this design,) at his coming hither, that he should first attempt to poison her, and if that did not take effect, then by any other way whatsoever to dispatch her. This, it seems, was proved by the report of Dr. Walter Bayly, sometime fellow of New College, then living in Oxford, and professor of physic in that university; whom, because he would not consent to take away her life by poison, the Earl endeavoured to displace him the court. This man, it seems, reported for most certain, that there was a practice in Cumnor among the conspirators, to have poisoned this poor innocent lady, a little before she was killed, which was attempted after this manner:—They seeing the good lady sad and heavy, (as one that well knew by her other handling, that her death was not far off,) began to persuade her that her present disease was abundance of melancholy and other humours, &c., and therefore would needs counsel her to take some potion, which she absolutely refusing to do, as still suspecting the worst; whereupon they sent a messenger on a day (unawares to her) for Dr. Bayly, and entreated him to persuade her to take some little potion by his direction, and they would fetch the same at Oxford; meaning to have added something of their own for her comfort, as the doctor upon just cause and consideration did suspect, seeing their great importunity, and the small need the lady had of physic, and therefore he peremptorily denied

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their request; misdoubting, (as he afterwards reported,) lest, if they had poisoned her under the name of his potion, he might after have been hanged for a colour of their sin, and the doctor remained still well assured, that this way taking no effect, she would not long escape their violence, which afterwards happened thus. For Sir Richard Varney above-said, (the chief projector in this design,) who, by the Earl's order, remained that day of her death alone with her, with one man only and Forster, who had that day forcibly sent away all her servants from her to Abington market, about three miles distant from this place; they (I say whether first stifling her, or else strangling her) afterwards flung her down a pair of stairs and broke her neck, using much violence upon her; but, however, though it was vulgarly reported that she by chance fell down stairs, (but still without hurting her hood that was upon her head,) yet the inhabitants will tell you there, that she was conveyed from her usual chamber where she lay, to another where the bed's head of the chamber stood close to a privy postern door, where they in the night came and stifled her in her bed, bruised her head very much, broke her neck, and at length flung her down stairs, thereby believing the world would have thought it a mischance, and so have blinded their villany. But behold the mercy and justice of God in revenging and discovering this lady's murder, for one of the persons that was a coadjutor in this murder was afterwards taken for a felony in the marches of Wales, and offering to publish the manner of the aforesaid murder, was privately made away in the prison by the Earl's appointment; and Sir Richard Varney the other, dying about the same time in London, cried miserably, and blasphemed God, and said to a person of note, (who hath

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related the same to others since,) not long before his death, that all the devils in hell did tear him in pieces. Forster, likewise, after this fact, being a man formerly addicted to hospitality, company, mirth, and music, was afterwards observed to forsake all this, and with much melancholy and pensiveness, (some say with madness,) pined and drooped away. The wife also of Bald Butter, kinsman to the Earl, gave out the whole fact a little before her death. Neither are these following passages to be forgotten, that as soon as ever she was murdered, they made great haste to bury her before the coroner had given in his inquest, (which the Earl himself condemned as not done advisedly,) which her father, or Sir John Robertsett, (as I suppose,) hearing of, came with all speed hither, caused her corpse to be taken up, the coroner to sit upon her, and farther inquiry to be made concerning this business to the full; but it was generally thought that the Earl stopped his mouth, and made up the business betwixt them; and the good Earl, to make plain to the world the great love he bare to her while alive, and what a grief the loss of so virtuous a lady was to his tender heart, caused (though the thing, by these and other means, was beaten into the heads of the principal men of the university of Oxford) her body to be reburied in Saint Mary's church in Oxford, with great pomp and solemnity. It is remarkable, when Dr. Babington, the Earl's chaplain, did preach the funeral sermon, he tript once or twice in his speech, by recommending to their memories that virtuous lady so pitifully *murdered*, instead of saying pitifully slain. This Earl, after all his murders and poisonings, was himself poisoned by that which was prepared for others, (some say by his wife at Cornbury Lodge before mentioned,) though Baker

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in his chronicle would have it at Killingworth, anno 1588." *

The same accusation has been adopted and circulated by the author of Leicester's Commonwealth, a satire written directly against the Earl of Leicester, which loaded him with the most horrid crimes, and, among the rest, with the murder of his first wife. It was alluded to in the Yorkshire Tragedy, a play erroneously ascribed to Shakspeare, where a rake, who determines to destroy all his family, throws his wife down stairs, with this allusion to the supposed murder of Leicester's Lady,—

> The only way to charm a woman's tongue
> Is, break her neck—a politician did it.

The reader will find I have borrowed several incidents as well as names from Ashmole, and the more early authorities; but my first acquaintance with the history was through the more pleasing medium of verse. There is a period in youth when the mere power of numbers has a more strong effect on ear and imagination, than in more advanced life. At this season of immature taste the author was greatly delighted with the poems of Mickle and Langhorne, poets who, though by no means deficient in the higher branches of their art, were eminent for their powers of verbal melody above most who have practised this department of poetry. One of those pieces of Mickle, which the author was particularly pleased with, is a

* Ashmole's Antiquities of Berkshire, vol. i. p. 149. The tradition as to Leicester's death was thus communicated by Ben Jonson to Drummond of Hawthornden :—"The Earl of Leicester gave a bottle of liquor to his Lady, which he willed her to use in any faintness, which she, after his returne from court, not knowing it was poison, gave him, and so he died."—Ben Jonson's Information to Drummond of Hawthornden, *MS.*—Sir Robert Sibbald's *Copy*.

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ballad, or rather a species of elegy, on the subject of Cumnor Hall, which, with others by the same author were to be found in Evans's Ancient Ballads, (volume iv page 130,) to which work Mickle made liberal contributions. The first stanza especially had a peculiar species of enchantment for the youthful ear of the author, the force of which is not even now entirely spent; some others are sufficiently prosaic.

CUMNOR HALL.

The dews of summer night did fall;
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silver'd the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby.

Now nought was heard beneath the skies,
The sounds of busy life were still,
Save an unhappy lady's sighs,
That issued from that lonely pile.

"Leicester," she cried, "is this thy love
That thou so oft hast sworn to me,
To leave me in this lonely grove,
Immured in shameful privity?

"No more thou com'st with lover's speed,
Thy once beloved bride to see;
But be she alive, or be she dead,
I fear, stern Earl, 's the same to thee.

"Not so the usage I received
When happy in my father's hall;
No faithless husband then me grieved,
No chilling fears did me appal.

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"I rose up with the cheerful morn,
No lark more blithe, no flower more gay;
And like the bird that haunts the thorn,
So merrily sung the livelong day.

"If that my beauty is but small,
Among court ladies all despised,
Why didst thou rend it from that hall,
Where, scornful Earl, it well was prized?

"And when you first to me made suit,
How fair I was, you oft would say!
And proud of conquest, pluck'd the fruit,
Then left the blossom to decay.

"Yes! now neglected and despised,
The rose is pale, the lily's dead;
But he that once their charms so prized,
Is sure the cause those charms are fled.

"For know, when sick'ning grief doth prey,
And tender love 's repaid with scorn,
The sweetest beauty will decay,—
What floweret can endure the storm?

"At court, I'm told, is beauty's throne,
Where every lady's passing rare,
That Eastern flowers, that shame the sun,
Are not so glowing, not so fair.

"Then, Earl, why didst thou leave the beds
Where roses and where lilies vie,
To seek a primrose, whose pale shades
Must sicken when those gauds are by?

"'Mong rural beauties I was one,
Among the fields wild flowers are fair;
Some country swain might me have won,
And thought my beauty passing rare.

"But, Leicester, (or I much am wrong,)
Or 'tis not beauty lures thy vows;
Rather ambition's gilded crown
Makes thee forget thy humble spouse.

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"Then, Leicester, why, again I plead,
(The injured surely may repine,)—
Why didst thou wed a country maid,
When some fair princess might be thine?

"Why didst thou praise my humble charms,
And, oh! then leave them to decay?
Why didst thou win me to thy arms
Then leave to mourn the livelong day?

"The village maidens of the plain
Salute me lowly as they go;
Envious they mark my silken train,
Nor think a Countess can have woe.

"The simple nymphs! they little know
How far more happy 's their estate;
To smile for joy than sigh for woe—
To be content—than to be great.

"How far less blest am I than them?
Daily to pine and waste with care!
Like the poor plant, that, from its stem
Divided, feels the chilling air.

"Nor, cruel Earl! can I enjoy
The humble charms of solitude;
Your minions proud my peace destroy,
By sullen frowns or pratings rude.

"Last night, as sad I chanced to stray,
The village death-bell smote my ear;
They wink'd aside, and seem'd to say,
'Countess, prepare, thy end is near!'

"And now, while happy peasants sleep,
Here I sit lonely and forlorn;
No one to soothe me as I weep,
Save Philomel on yonder thorn.

"My spirits flag—my hopes decay—
Still that dread death-bell smites my ear;
And many a boding seems to say,
'Countess, prepare, thy end is near!'"

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Thus sore and sad that lady grieved,
In Cumnor Hall so lone and drear;
And many a heartfelt sigh she heaved,
And let fall many a bitter tear.

And ere the dawn of day appear'd,
In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear,
Full many a piercing scream was heard
And many a cry of mortal fear.

The death-bell thrice was heard to ring
An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wing
Around the towers of Cumnor Hall.

The mastiff howl'd at village door,
The oaks were shatter'd on the green;
Wo was the hour—for never more
That hapless Countess e'er was seen!

And in that Manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball;
For ever since that dreary hour
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall.

The village maids, with fearful glance,
Avoid the ancient moss-grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance,
Among the groves of Cumnor Hall.

Full many a traveller oft hath sigh'd,
And pensive wept the Countess' fall,
As wandering onwards they've espied
The haunted towers of Cumnor Hall.

ABBOTSFORD, 1*st March*, 1831.

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KENILWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

I am an innkeeper, and know my grounds,
And study them; Brain o' man, I study them.
I must have jovial guests to drive my ploughs,
And whistling boys to bring my harvests home,
Or I shall hear no flails thwack.

THE NEW INN.

IT is the privilege of tale-tellers to open their story in an inn, the free rendezvous of all travellers, and where the humour of each displays itself, without ceremony or

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restraint. This is especially suitable when the scene is laid during the old days of merry England, when the guests were in some sort not merely the inmates, but the messmates and temporary companions of mine host, who was usually a personage of privileged freedom, comely presence and good-humour. Patronized by him, the characters of the company were placed in ready contrast; and they seldom failed, during the emptying of a six-hooped pot, to throw off reserve, and present themselves to each other, and to their landlord, with the freedom of old acquaintance.

The village of Cumnor, within three or four miles of Oxford, boasted, during the eighteenth year of Queen Elizabeth, an excellent inn of the old stamp, conducted, or rather ruled, by Giles Gosling, a man of a goodly person, and of somewhat round belly; fifty years of age and upwards, moderate in his reckonings, prompt in his payments, having a cellar of sound liquor, a ready wit, and a pretty daughter. Since the days of old Harry Baillie of the Tabbard in Southwark, no one had excelled Giles Gosling in the power of pleasing his guests of every description; and so great was his fame, that to have been in Cumnor, without wetting a cup at the bonny Black Bear, would have been to avouch one's-self utterly indifferent to reputation as a traveller. A country fellow might as well return from London, without looking in the face of majesty. The men of Cumnor were proud of their host, and their host was proud of his house, his liquor, his daughter, and himself.

It was in the court-yard of the inn which called this honest fellow landlord, that a traveller alighted in the close of the evening, gave his horse, which seemed to have made a long journey, to the hostler, and made some

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inquiry, which produced the following dialogue, betwixt the myrmidons of the bonny Black Bear.

"What, ho! John Tapster."

"At hand, Will Hostler," replied the man of the spigot, shewing himself in his costume of loose jacket, linen breeches, and green apron, half within and half without a door, which appeared to descend to an outer cellar.

"Here is a gentleman asks if you draw good ale," continued the hostler.

"Beshrew my heart else," answered the tapster, "since there are but four miles betwixt us and Oxford.—Marry, if my ale did not convince the heads of the scholars, they would soon convince my pate with the pewter flagon."

"Call you that Oxford logic?" said the stranger, who had now quitted the rein of his horse, and was advancing towards the inn door, when he was encountered by the goodly form of Giles Gosling himself.

"Is it logic you talk of, Sir Guest?" said the host; "why, then, have at you with a downright consequence—

'The horse to the rack,
And to fire with the sack.'"

"Amen! with all my heart, my good host," said the stranger; "let it be a quart of your best canaries, and give me your good help to drink it."

"Nay, you are but in your accidence yet, Sir Traveller, if you call on your host for help for such a sipping matter as a quart of sack—were it a gallon, you might lack some neighbourly aid at my hand, and yet call yourself a toper."

"Fear me not," said the guest, "I will do my devoir as becomes a man who finds himself within five miles of Oxford; for I am not come from the field of Mars to discredit myself amongst the followers of Minerva."

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As he spoke thus, the landlord, with much semblance of hearty welcome, ushered his guest into a large low chamber, where several persons were seated together in different parties; some drinking, some playing at cards, some conversing, and some whose business called them to be early risers on the morrow, concluding their evening meal, and conferring with the chamberlain about their night's quarters.

The entrance of a stranger procured him that general and careless sort of attention which is usually paid on such occasions, from which the following results were deduced:—The guest was one of those who, with a well-made person, and features not in themselves unpleasing, are nevertheless so far from handsome, that, whether from the expression of their features, or the tone of their voice, or from their gait and manner, there arises, on the whole, a disinclination to their society. The stranger's address was bold, without being frank, and seemed eagerly and hastily to claim for him a degree of attention and deference, which he feared would be refused, if not instantly vindicated as his right. His attire was a riding-cloak, which, when open, displayed a handsome jerkin overlaid with lace, and belted with a buff girdle, which sustained a broadsword and a pair of pistols.

"You ride well provided, sir," said the host, looking at the weapons as he placed on the table the mulled sack which the traveller had ordered.

"Yes, mine host; I have found the use on't in dangerous times, and I do not, like your modern grandees, turn off my followers the instant they are useless."

"Ay, sir?" said Giles Gosling; "then you are from the Low Countries, the land of pike and caliver?"

"I have been high and low, my friend, broad and

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wide, far and near; but here is to thee in a cup of thy sack—fill thyself another to pledge me; and, if it is less than superlative, e'en drink as you have brewed."

"Less than superlative?" said Giles Gosling, drinking off the cup, and smacking his lips with an air of ineffable relish,—"I know nothing of superlative, nor is there such a wine at the Three Cranes, in the Vintry, to my knowledge; but if you find better sack than that in the Sheres, or in the Canaries either, I would I may never touch either pot or penny more. Why, hold it up betwixt you and the light, you shall see the little motes dance in the golden liquor like dust in the sunbeam. But I would rather draw wine for ten clowns than one traveller.—I trust your honour likes the wine?"

"It is neat and comfortable, mine host; but to know good liquor, you should drink where the vine grows. Trust me, your Spaniard is too wise a man to send you the very soul of the grape. Why, this now, which you account so choice, were counted but as a cup of bastard at the Groyne, or at Port Saint Mary's. You should travel, mine host, if you would be deep in the mysteries of the butt and pottle-pot."

"In troth, Signior Guest," said Giles Gosling, "if I were to travel only that I might be discontented with that which I can get at home, methinks I should go but on a fool's errand. Besides, I warrant you, there is many a fool can turn his nose up at good drink without ever having been out of the smoke of Old England; and so ever gramercy mine own fireside."

"This is but a mean mind of yours mine host," said the stranger; "I warrant me, all your town's folk do not think so basely. You have gallants among you, I dare undertake, that have made the Virginia voyage, or taken

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a turn in the Low Countries at least. Come, cudgel your memory. Have you no friends in foreign parts that you would gladly have tidings of?"

"Troth, sir, not I," answered the host, "since ranting Robin of Drysandford was shot at the siege of the Brill. The devil take the caliver that fired the ball, for a blither lad never filled a cup at midnight. But he is dead and gone, and I know not a soldier, or a traveller, who is a soldier's mate, that I would give a peeled codling for."

"By the mass, that is strange. What! so many of our brave English hearts are abroad, and you, who seem to be a man of mark, have no friend, no kinsman, among them!"

"Nay, if you speak of kinsmen," answered Gosling, "I have one wild slip of a kinsman, who left us in the last year of Queen Mary; but he is better lost than found."

"Do not say so, friend, unless you have heard ill of him lately. Many a wild colt has turned out a noble steed.—His name, I pray you?"

"Michael Lambourne," answered the landlord of the Black Bear; "a son of my sister's—there is little pleasure in recollecting either the name or the connexion."

"Michael Lambourne!" said the stranger, as if endeavouring to recollect himself—"what, no relation to Michael Lambourne, the gallant cavalier who behaved so bravely at the siege of Venlo, that Grave Maurice thanked him at the head of the army! Men said he was an English cavalier, and of no high extraction."

"It could scarcely be my nephew," said Giles Gosling, "for he had not the courage of a hen-partridge for aught but mischief."

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"Oh, many a man finds courage in the wars," replied the stranger.

"It may be," said the landlord; "but I would have thought our Mike more likely to lose the little he had."

"The Michael Lambourne whom I knew," continued the traveller, "was a likely fellow—went always gay and well-attired, and had a hawk's eye after a pretty wench."

"Our Michael," replied the host, "had the look of a dog with a bottle at its tail, and wore a coat, every rag of which was bidding good day to the rest."

"Oh, men pick up good apparel in the wars," replied the guest.

"Our Mike," answered the landlord, "was more like to pick it up in a frippery warehouse, while the broker was looking another way; and, for the hawk's eye you talk of, his was always after my stray spoons. He was tapster's boy here in this blessed house for a quarter of a year; and between misreckonings, miscarriages, mistakes, and misdemeanours, had he dwelt with me for three months longer, I might have pulled down sign, shut up house, and given the devil the key to keep."

"You would be sorry, after all," continued the traveller, "were I to tell you poor Mike Lambourne was shot at the head of his regiment at the taking of a sconce near Maestricht?"

"Sorry!—it would be the blithest news I ever heard of him, since it would ensure me he was not hanged. But let him pass—I doubt his end will never do such credit to his friends: were it so, I should say"—(taking another cup of sack)—"Here's God rest him, with all my heart."

"Tush, man," replied the traveller, "never fear but you will have credit by your nephew yet, especially if he be the Michael Lambourne whom I knew, and loved

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very nearly, or altogether, as well as myself. Can you tell me no mark by which I could judge whether they be the same?"

"Faith, none that I can think of," answered Giles Gosling, "unless that our Mike had the gallows branded on his left shoulder for stealing a silver caudle-cup from Dame Snort of Hogsditch."

"Nay, there you lie like a knave, uncle," said the stranger, slipping aside his ruff, and turning down the sleeve of his doublet from his neck and shoulder; "by this good day, my shoulder is as unscarred as thine own."

"What, Mike, boy—Mike!"—exclaimed the host;—"and is it thou, in good earnest? Nay, I have judged so for this half hour; for I knew no other person would have ta'en half the interest in thee. But, Mike, an thy shoulder be unscathed as thou sayest, thou must own that Goodman Thong, the hangman, was merciful in his office, and stamped thee with a cold iron."

"Tush, uncle—truce with your jests. Keep them to season your sour ale, and let us see what hearty welcome thou wilt give a kinsman who has rolled the world around for eighteen years; who has seen the sun set where it rises, and has travelled till the west has become the east."

"Thou hast brought back one traveller's gift with thee, Mike, as I well see; and that was what thou least didst need to travel for. I remember well, among thine other qualities, there was no crediting a word which came from thy mouth."

"Here's an unbelieving Pagan for you, gentlemen!" said Michael Lambourne, turning to those who witnessed this strange interview betwixt uncle and nephew, some of whom, being natives of the village, were no strangers

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to his juvenile wildness. "This may be called slaying a Cumnor fatted calf for me with a vengeance.—But, uncle, I come not from the husks and the swine-trough, and I care not for thy welcome or no welcome; I carry that with me will make me welcome, wend where I will."

So saying, he pulled out a purse of gold, indifferently well filled, the sight of which produced a visible effect upon the company. Some shook their heads, and whispered to each other, while one or two of the less scrupulous speedily began to recollect him as a school-companion, a townsman, or so forth. On the other hand, two or three grave sedate-looking persons shook their heads, and left the inn, hinting, that if Giles Gosling wished to continue to thrive, he should turn his thriftless, godless nephew adrift again, as soon as he could. Gosling demeaned himself, as if he were much of the same opinion; for even the sight of the gold made less impression on the honest gentleman, than it usually doth upon one of his calling.

"Kinsman Michael," he said, "put up thy purse. My sister's son shall be called to no reckoning in my house for supper or lodging; and I reckon thou wilt hardly wish to stay longer, where thou art e'en but too well known."

"For that matter, uncle," replied the traveller, "I shall consult my own needs and conveniences. Meantime I wish to give the supper and sleeping cup to those good townsmen, who are not too proud to remember Mike Lambourne, the tapster's boy. If you will let me have entertainment for my money, so—if not, it is but a short two minutes' walk to the Hare and Tabor, and I trust our neighbours will not grudge going thus far with me."

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"Nay, Mike," replied his uncle, "as eighteen years have gone over thy head, and I trust thou art somewhat amended in thy conditions, thou shalt not leave my house at this hour, and shalt e'en have whatever in reason you list to call for. But I would I knew that that purse of thine, which thou vapourest of, were as well come by as it seems well filled."

"Here is an infidel for you, my good neighbours," said Lambourne, again appealing to the audience. "Here's a fellow will rip up his kinsman's follies of a good score of years' standing—And for the gold, why, sirs, I have been where it grew, and was to be had for the gathering. In the New World have I been, man—in the Eldorado, where urchins play at cherry-pit with diamonds, and country wenches thread rubies for necklaces, instead of rowan-tree berries; where the pantiles are made of pure gold, and the paving stones of virgin silver."

"By my credit, friend Mike," said young Laurence Goldthred, the cutting mercer of Abingdon, "that were a likely coast to trade to. And what may lawns, cypresses, and ribands fetch, where gold is so plenty?"

"Oh, the profit were unutterable," replied Lambourne, "especially when a handsome young merchant bears the pack himself; for the ladies of that clime are bona-robas, and being themselves somewhat sunburnt, they catch fire like tinder at a fresh complexion like thine, with a head of hair inclining to be red."

"I would I might trade thither," said the mercer, chuckling.

"Why, and so thou mayest," said Michael; "that is, if thou art the same brisk boy who was partner with me at robbing the Abbot's orchard—'tis but a little touch of alchemy to decoct thy house and land into ready money,

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and that ready money into a tall ship, with sails, anchors, cordage, and all things conforming; then clap thy warehouse of goods under hatches, put fifty good fellows on deck, with myself to command them, and so hoise topsails, and hey for the New World!"

"Thou hast taught him a secret, kinsman," said Giles Gosling, "to decoct, an that be the word, his pound into a penny, and his webs into a thread.—Take a fool's advice, neighbour Goldthred. Tempt not the sea, for she is a devourer. Let cards and cockatrices do their worst, thy father's bales may bide a banging for a year or two, ere thou comest to the Spital; but the sea hath a bottomless appetite,—she would swallow the wealth of Lombard Street in a morning, as easily as I would a poached egg, and a cup of clary;—and for my kinsman's Eldorado, never trust me if I do not believe he has found it in the pouches of some such gulls as thyself.—But take no snuff in the nose about it; fall to and welcome, for here comes the supper, and I heartily bestow it on all that will take share, in honour of my hopeful nephew's return, always trusting that he has come home another man.—In faith, kinsman, thou art as like my poor sister as ever was son to mother."

"Not quite so like old Benedict Lambourne her husband, though," said the mercer, nodding and winking. "Dost thou remember, Mike, what thou saidst when the schoolmaster's ferule was over thee for striking up thy father's crutches?—it is a wise child, saidst thou, that knows its own father. Dr. Bircham laughed till he cried again, and his crying saved yours."

"Well, he made it up to me many a day after," said Lambourne; "and how is the worthy pedagogue?"

"Dead," said Giles Gosling, "this many a day since."

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"That he is," said the clerk of the parish; "I sat by his bed the whilst—He passed away in a blessed frame, '*Morior—mortuus sum vel fui—mori*'—These were his latest words, and he just added, 'my last verb is conjugated.'"

"Well, peace be with him," said Mike, "he owes me nothing."

"No, truly," replied Goldthred; "and every lash which he laid on thee, he always was wont to say, he spared the hangman a labour."

"One would have thought he left him little to do then," said the clerk; "and yet Goodman Thong had no sinecure of it with our friend, after all."

"*Voto a dios!*" exclaimed Lambourne, his patience appearing to fail him, as he snatched his broad slouched hat from the table and placed it on his head, so that the shadow gave the sinister expression of a Spanish bravo to eyes and features which naturally boded nothing pleasant. "Harkee, my masters—all is fair among friends, and under the rose; and I have already permitted my worthy uncle here, and all of you, to use your pleasure with the frolics of my nonage. But I carry sword and dagger, my good friends, and can use them lightly too upon occasion—I have learned to be dangerous upon points of honour ever since I served the Spaniard, and I would not have you provoke me to the degree of falling foul."

"Why, what would you do?" said the clerk.

"Ay, sir, what would you do?" said the mercer, bustling up on the other side of the table.

"Slit your throat, and spoil your Sunday's quavering, Sir Clerk," said Lambourne, fiercely; "cudgel you, my worshipful dealer in flimsy sarsenets, into one of your own bales."

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"Come, come," said the host, interposing, "I will have no swaggering here.—Nephew, it will become you best to show no haste to take offence; and you, gentlemen, will do well to remember, that if you are in an inn, still you are the innkeeper's guests, and should spare the honour of his family.—I protest your silly broils make me as oblivious as yourself; for yonder sits my silent guest, as I call him, who hath been my two days' inmate, and hath never spoken a word, save to ask for his food and his reckoning—gives no more trouble than a very peasant—pays his shot like a prince royal—looks but at the sum total of the reckoning, and does not know what day he shall go away. Oh, 'tis a jewel of a guest! and yet, hang-dog that I am, I have suffered him to sit by himself like a castaway in yonder obscure nook, without so much as asking him to take bite or sup along with us. It were but the right guerdon of my incivility, were he to set off to the Hare and Tabor before the night grows older."

With his white napkin gracefully arranged over his left arm, his velvet cap laid aside for the moment, and his best silver flagon in his right hand, mine host walked up to the solitary guest whom he mentioned, and thereby turned upon him the eyes of the assembled company.

He was a man aged betwixt twenty-five and thirty, rather above the middle size, dressed with plainness and decency, yet bearing an air of ease, which almost amounted to dignity, and which seemed to infer that his habit was rather beneath his rank. His countenance was reserved and thoughtful, with dark hair and dark eyes—the last, upon any momentary excitement, sparkled with uncommon lustre, but on other occasions had the same meditative and tranquil cast which was exhibited by his features.

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The busy curiosity of the little village had been employed to discover his name and quality, as well as his business at Cumnor; but nothing had transpired on either subject which could lead to its gratification. Giles Gosling, headborough of the place, and a steady friend to Queen Elizabeth and the Protestant religion, was at one time inclined to suspect his guest of being a Jesuit, or seminary priest, of whom Rome and Spain sent at this time so many to grace the gallows in England. But it was scarce possible to retain such a prepossession against a guest who gave so little trouble, paid his reckoning so regularly, and who proposed, as it seemed, to make a considerable stay at the bonny Black Bear.

"Papists," argued Giles Gosling, "are a pinching, close-fisted race, and this man would have found a lodging with the wealthy squire at Bessellsey, or with the old Knight at Wootton, or in some other of their Roman dens, instead of living in a house of public entertainment, as every honest man and good Christian should. Besides, on Friday, he stuck by the salt beef and carrot, though there were as good spitchcock'd eels on the board as ever were ta'en out of the Isis."

Honest Giles, therefore, satisfied himself that his guest was no Roman, and with all comely courtesy besought the stranger to pledge him in a draught of the cool tankard, and honour with his attention a small collation which he was giving to his nephew, in honour of his return, and, as he verily hoped, of his reformation. The stranger at first shook his head, as if declining the courtesy; but mine host proceeded to urge him with arguments founded on the credit of his house, and the construction which the good people of Cumnor might put upon such an unsocial humour.

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"By my faith, sir," he said, "it touches my reputation that men should be merry in my house, and we have ill tongues amongst us at Cumnor, (as where be there not?) who put an evil mark on men who pull their hat over their brows as if they were looking back to the days that are gone, instead of enjoying the blithe sunshiny weather which God hath sent us in the sweet looks of our sovereign mistress, Queen Elizabeth, whom Heaven long bless and preserve!"

"Why, mine host," answered the stranger, "there is no treason, sure, in a man's enjoying his own thoughts, under the shadow of his own bonnet? You have lived in the world twice as long as I have, and you must know there are thoughts that will haunt us in spite of ourselves, and to which it is in vain to say, be gone, and let me be merry."

"By my sooth," answered Giles Gosling, "if such troublesome thoughts haunt your mind, and will not get them gone for plain English, we will have one of Father Bacon's pupils from Oxford, to conjure them away with logic and with Hebrew—Or, what say you to laying them in a glorious red sea of claret, my noble guest? Come, sir, excuse my freedom. I am an old host, and must have my talk. This peevish humour of melancholy sits ill upon you—it suits not with a sleek boot, a hat of a trim block, a fresh cloak, and a full purse—A pize on it, send it off to those who have their legs swathed with a hay-wisp, their heads thatched with a felt bonnet, their jerkin as thin as a cobweb, and their pouch without ever a cross to keep the fiend Melancholy from dancing in it. Cheer up, sir! or by this good liquor we will banish thee from the joys of blithesome company, into the mists of melancholy and the land of little-ease. Here be a set of good

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fellows willing to be merry; do not scowl on them like the devil looking over Lincoln."

"You say well, my worthy host," said the guest, with a melancholy smile, which, melancholy as it was, gave a very pleasant expression to his countenance—"You say well, my jovial friend; and they that are moody like myself, should not disturb the mirth of those who are happy —I will drink a round with your guests with all my heart, rather than be termed a mar-feast."

So saying, he arose and joined the company, who, encouraged by the precept and example of Michael Lambourne, and consisting chiefly of persons much disposed to profit by the opportunity of a merry meal at the expense of their landlord, had already made some inroads upon the limits of temperance, as was evident from the tone in which Michael inquired after his old acquaintances in the town, and the bursts of laughter with which each answer was received. Giles Gosling himself was somewhat scandalized at the obstreperous nature of their mirth, especially as he involuntarily felt some respect for his unknown guest. He paused, therefore, at some distance from the table occupied by these noisy revellers, and began to make a sort of apology for their license.

"You would think," he said, "to hear these fellows talk, that there was not one of them who had not been bred to live by Stand and Deliver; and yet to-morrow you will find them a set of as pains-taking mechanics, and so forth, as ever cut an inch short of measure, or paid a letter of change in light crowns over a counter. The mercer there wears his hat awry, over a shagged head of hair, that looks like a curly water-dog's back, goes unbraced, wears his cloak on one side, and affects a ruffianly vâpouring humour—when in his shop at Abing-

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don, he is, from his flat cap to his glistening shoes, as precise in his apparel as if he was named for mayor. He talks of breaking parks, and taking the highway, in such fashion that you would think he haunted every night betwixt Hounslow and London; when in fact he may be found sound asleep on his feather-bed, with a candle placed beside him on one side, and a Bible on the other, to fright away the goblins."

"And your nephew, mine host, this same Michael Lambourne, who is lord of the feast—is he, too, such a would-be ruffler as the rest of them?"

"Why, there you push me hard," said the host; "my nephew is my nephew, and though he was a desperate Dick of yore, yet Mike may have mended like other folks, you wot—And I would not have you think all I said of him, even now, was strict gospel—I knew the wag all the while, and wished to pluck his plumes from him—And now, sir, by what name shall I present my worshipful guest to these gallants?"

"Marry, mine host," replied the stranger, "you may call me Tressilian."

"Tressilian?" answered my host of the Bear, "a worthy name; and, as I think, of Cornish lineage; for what says the south proverb—

> By Pol, Tre, and Pen,
> You may know the Cornish men.'

Shall I say the worthy Mr. Tressilian of Cornwall?"

"Say no more than I have given you warrant for, mine host, and so shall you be sure you speak no more than is true. A man may have one of those honourable prefixes to his name, yet be born far from Saint Michael's Mount."

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Mine host pushed his curiosity no farther, but presented Mr. Tressilian to his nephew's company, who, after exchange of salutations, and drinking to the health of their new companion, pursued the conversation in which he found them engaged, seasoning it with many an intervening pledge.

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CHAPTER II.

Talk you of young Master Lancelot?

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

AFTER some brief interval, Master Goldthred, at the earnest instigation of mine host, and the joyous concurrence of his guests, indulged the company with the following morsel of melody:

Of all the birds on bush or tree,
Commend me to the owl,
Since he may best ensample be
To those the cup that trowl.
For when the sun hath left the west,
He chooses the tree that he loves the best,
And he whoops out his song, and he laughs at his jest;
Then though hours be late, and weather foul,
We'll drink to the health of the bonny, bonny owl.

The lark is but a bumpkin fowl,
He sleeps in his nest till morn;
But my blessing upon the jolly owl,
That all night blows his horn.
Then up with your cup till you stagger in speech,
And match me this catch though you swagger and screech,
And drink till you wink, my merry men each:
For though hours be late, and weather be foul,
We'll drink to the health of the bonny, bonny owl.

"There is savour in this, my hearts," said Michael, when the mercer had finished his song, "and some good-

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ness seems left among you yet—but what a bead-roll you have read me of old comrades, and to every man's name tacked some ill-omened motto! And so Swashing Will of Wallingford hath bid us good-night?"

"He died the death of a fat buck," said one of the party, "being shot with a crossbow bolt, by old Thatcham, the Duke's stout park-keeper at Donnington Castle."

"Ay, ay, he always loved venison well," replied Michael, "and a cup of claret to boot—and so here's one to his memory. Do me right, my masters."

When the health of this departed worthy had been duly honoured, Lambourne proceeded to inquire after Prance of Padworth.

"Pranced off—made immortal ten years since," said the mercer; "marry, sir, Oxford Castle and Goodman Thong, and a tenpenny-worth of cord best know how."

"What, so they hung poor Prance high and dry? so much for loving to walk by moonlight—a cup to his memory, my masters—all merry fellows like moonlight. What has become of Hal with the plume?—he who lived near Yattenden, and wore the long feather—I forget his name."

"What, Hal Hempseed?" replied the mercer, "why, you may remember, he was a sort of a gentleman, and would meddle in state matters, and so he got into the mire about the Duke of Norfolk's matter these two or three years since, fled the country with a pursuivant's warrant at his heels, and has never since been heard of."

"Nay, after these baulks," said Michael Lambourne, "I need hardly inquire after Tony Foster; for when ropes, and crossbow shafts, and pursuivant's warrants, and such like gear, were so rife, Tony could hardly 'scape them."

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"Which Tony Foster mean you?" said the innkeeper.

"Why, he they called Tony Fire-the-Fagot, because he brought a light to kindle the pile round Latimer and Ridley, when the wind blew out Jack Thong's torch, and no man else would give him light for love or money."

"Tony Foster lives and thrives," said the host.—"But, kinsman, I would not have you call him Tony Fire-the-Fagot, if you would not brook the stab."

"How! is he grown ashamed on't?" said Lambourne; "why he was wont to boast of it, and say he liked as well to see a roasted heretic as a roasted ox."

"Ay, but, kinsman, that was in Mary's time," replied the landlord, "when Tony's father was Reeve here to the Abbot of Abingdon. But since that, Tony married a pure precisian, and is as good a Protestant, I warrant you, as the best."

"And looks grave, and holds his head high, and scorns his old companions," said the mercer.

"Then he hath prospered, I warrant him," said Lambourne; "for ever when a man hath got nobles of his own, he keeps out of the way of those whose exchequers lie in other men's purchase."

"Prospered, quotha!" said the mercer; "why, you remember Cumnor-Place, the old mansion-house beside the church-yard?"

"By the same token, I robbed the orchard three times —what of that?—It was the old Abbot's residence when there was plague or sickness at Abingdon."

"Ay," said the host, "but that has been long over; and Anthony Foster hath a right in it, and lives there by some grant from a great courtier, who had the church-lands from the crown; and there he dwells, and has as

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little to do with any poor wight in Cumnor, as if he were himself a belted knight."

"Nay," said the mercer, "it is not altogether pride in Tony neither—there is a fair lady in the case, and Tony will scarce let the light of day look on her."

"How!" said Tressilian, who now for the first time interfered in their conversation, "did ye not say this Foster was married, and to a precisian?"

"Married he was, and to as bitter a precisian as ever eat flesh in Lent; and a cat-and-dog life she led with Tony, as men said. But she is dead, rest be with her, and Tony hath but a slip of a daughter; so it is thought he means to wed this stranger, that men keep such a coil about."

"And why so?—I mean, why do they keep a coil about her?" said Tressilian.

"Why, I wot not," answered the host, "except that men say she is as beautiful as an angel, and no one knows whence she comes, and every one wishes to know why she is kept so closely mewed up. For my part, I never saw her—you have, I think, Master Goldthred?"

"That I have, old boy," said the mercer. "Look you, I was riding hither from Abingdon—I passed under the east oriel window of the old mansion, where all the old saints and histories and such like are painted—It was not the common path I took, but one through the Park; for the postern-door was upon the latch, and I thought I might take the privilege of an old comrade to ride across through the trees, both for shading, as the day was somewhat hot, and for avoiding of dust, because I had on my peach-coloured doubtlet, pinked out with cloth of gold."

"Which garment," said Michael Lambourne, "thou

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wouldst willingly make twinkle in the eyes of a fair dame. Ah! villain, thou wilt never leave thy old tricks."

"Not so—not so," said the mercer, with a smirking laugh; "not altogether so—but curiosity, thou knowest, and a strain of compassion withal,—for the poor young lady sees nothing from morn to even but Tony Foster, with his scowling black brows, his bull's head, and his bandy legs."

"And thou wouldst willingly shew her a dapper body, in a silken jerkin—a limb like a short-legged hen's, in a cordovan boot, and a round, simpering, what-d'ye-lack sort of a countenance, set off with a velvet bonnet, a Turkey feather, and a gilded brooch? Ah! jolly mercer, they who have good wares are fond to shew them! Come, gentles, let not the cup stand—here's to long spurs, short boots, full bonnets, and empty skulls!"

"Nay, now, you are jealous of me, Mike," said Goldthred; "and yet my luck was but what might have happened to thee, or any man."

"Marry confound thine impudence," retorted Lambourne; "thou wouldst not compare thy pudding face, and sarsenet manners, to a gentleman and a soldier?"

"Nay, my good sir," said Tressilian, "let me beseech you will not interrupt the gallant citizen; methinks he tells his tale so well, I could hearken to him till midnight."

"It's more of your favour than of my desert," answered Master Goldthred; "but since I give you pleasure, worthy Master Tressilian, I shall proceed, maugre all the gibes and quips of this valiant soldier, who, peradventure, hath had more cuffs than crowns in the Low Countries.—And so, sir, as I passed under the great painted window, leaving my rein loose on my ambling

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palfrey's neck, partly for mine ease, and partly that I might have the more leisure to peer about, I hears me the lattice open; and never credit me, sir, if there did not stand there the person of as fair a woman as ever crossed mine eyes; and I think I have looked on as many pretty wenches, and with as much judgment, as other folks."

"May I ask her appearance, sir?" said Tressilian.

"Oh, sir," replied Master Goldthred, "I promise you, she was in gentlewoman's attire—a very quaint and pleasing dress, that might have served the Queen herself; for she had a fore-part with body and sleeves, of ginger-coloured satin, which, in my judgment, must have cost by the yard some thirty shillings, lined with murrey taffeta, and laid down and guarded with two broad laces of gold and silver. And her hat, sir, was truly the best fashioned thing that I have seen in these parts, being of tawny taffeta, embroidered with scorpions of Venice gold, and having a border garnished with gold fringe;—I promise you, sir, an absolute and all-surpassing device. Touching her skirts, they were in the old pass-devant fashion."

"I did not ask you of her attire, sir," said Tressilian, who had shewn some impatience during their conversation, "but of her complexion—the colour of her hair, her features."

"Touching her complexion," answered the mercer, "I am not so special certain; but I marked that her fan had an ivory handle, curiously inlaid;—and then again, as to the colour of her hair, why, I can warrant, be its hue what it might, that she wore above it a net of green silk, parcel twisted with gold."

"A most mercer-like memory," said Lambourne; "the

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gentleman asks him of the lady's beauty, and he talks of her fine clothes."

"I tell thee," said the mercer, somewhat disconcerted, "I had little time to look at her; for just as I was about to give her the good time of day, and for that purpose had puckered my features with a smile——"

"Like those of a jackanape simpering at a chestnut," said Michael Lambourne.

—"Up started of a sudden," continued Goldthred, without heeding the interruption, "Tony Foster himself, with a cudgel in his hand——"

"And broke thy head across, I hope, for thine impertinence," said his entertainer.

"That were more easily said than done," answered Goldthred indignantly; "no, no—there was no breaking of heads—it's true, he advanced his cudgel, and spoke of laying on, and asked why I did not keep the public road, and such like; and I would have knocked him over the pate handsomely for his pains, only for the lady's presence, who might have swooned, for what I know."

"Now, out upon thee for a faint-spirited slave!" said Lambourne; "what adventurous knight ever thought of the lady's terror, when he went to thwack giant, dragon, or magician, in her presence, and for her deliverance? But why talk to thee of dragons, who would be driven back by a dragon-fly. There thou hast missed the rarest opportunity!"

"Take it thyself, then, bully Mike," answered Goldthred.—"Yonder is the enchanted manor, and the dragon, and the lady, all at thy service, if thou darest venture on them."

"Why, so I would for a quartern of sack," said the soldier—"Or stay—I am foully out of linen—wilt thou

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bet a piece of Hollands against these five angels, that I go not up to the Hall to-morrow, and force Tony Foster to introduce me to his fair guest?"

"I accept your wager," said the mercer; "and I think though thou hadst even the impudence of the devil, I shall gain on thee this bout. Our landlord here shall hold stakes, and I will stake down gold till I send the linen."

"I will hold stakes on no such matter," said Gosling. "Good now, my kinsman, drink your wine in quiet, and let such ventures alone. I promise you, Master Foster hath interest enough to lay you up in lavender at the Castle of Oxford, or to get your legs made acquainted with the town-stocks."

"That would be but renewing an old intimacy; for Mike's shins and the town's wooden pinfold have been well known to each other ere now," said the mercer; "but he shall not budge from his wager, unless he means to pay forfeit."

"Forfeit?" said Lambourne; "I scorn it. I value Tony Foster's wrath no more than a shelled pea-cod; and I will visit his Lindabrides, by Saint George, be he willing or no!"

"I would gladly pay your halves of the risk, sir," said Tressilian, "to be permitted to accompany you on the adventure."

"In what would that advantage you, sir?" answered Lambourne.

"In nothing, sir," said Tressilian, "unless to mark the skill and valour with which you conduct yourself. I am a traveller, who seeks for strange rencounters and uncommon passages, as the knights of yore did after adventures and feats of arms."

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"Nay, if it pleasures you to see a trout tickled," answered Lambourne, "I care not how many witness my skill. And so here I drink success to my enterprise; and he that will not pledge me on his knees is a rascal, and I will cut his legs off by the garters!"

The draught which Michael Lambourne took upon this occasion had been preceded by so many others, that reason tottered on her throne. He swore one or two incoherent oaths at the mercer, who refused, reasonably enough, to pledge him to a sentiment which inferred the loss of his own wager.

"Wilt thou chop logic with me," said Lambourne, "thou knave, with no more brains than a skein of ravelled silk? By Heaven, I will cut thee into fifty yards of galloon lace!"

But as he attempted to draw his sword for this doughty purpose, Michael Lambourne was seized upon by the tapster and the chamberlain, and conveyed to his own apartment, there to sleep himself sober at his leisure.

The party then broke up, and the guests took their leave; much more to the contentment of mine host than of some of the company, who were unwilling to quit good liquor, when it was to be had for free cost, so long as they were able to sit by it. They were, however, compelled to remove; and go at length they did, leaving Gosling and Tressilian in the empty apartment.

"By my faith," said the former, "I wonder where our great folks find pleasure, when they spend their means in entertainments, and in playing mine host without sending in a reckoning. It is what I but rarely practice; and whenever I do, by Saint Julian, it grieves me beyond measure. Each of these empty stoups, now, which my nephew and his drunken comrades have swilled off,

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should have been a matter of profit to one in my line, and I must set them down a dead loss. I cannot, for my heart, conceive the pleasure of noise, and nonsense, and drunken freaks, and drunken quarrels, and smut, and blasphemy, and so forth, when a man loses money instead of gaining by it. And yet many a fair estate is lost in upholding such a useless course, and that greatly contributes to the decay of publicans; for who the devil do you think would pay for drink at the Black Bear, when he can have it for nothing at my Lord's or the Squire's?"

Tressilian perceived that the wine had made some impression even on the seasoned brain of mine host, which was chiefly to be inferred from his declaiming against drunkenness. As he himself had carefully avoided the bowl, he would have availed himself of the frankness of the moment, to extract from Gosling some farther information upon the subject of Anthony Foster, and the lady whom the mercer had seen in the mansion-house; but his inquiries only set the host upon a new theme of declamation against the wiles of the fair sex, in which he brought at full length the whole wisdom of Solomon to reinforce his own. Finally, he turned his admonitions, mixed with much objurgation, upon his tapsters and drawers, who were employed in removing the relics of the entertainment, and restoring order to the apartment; and at length joining example to precept, though with no good success, he demolished a salver with half a score of glasses, in attempting to shew how such service was done at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, then the most topping tavern in London. This last accident so far recalled him to his better self, that he retired to his bed, slept sound, and awoke a new man in the morning.

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CHAPTER III.

Nay, I'll hold touch—the game shall be play'd out,
It ne'er shall stop for me, this merry wager;
That which I say when gamesome, I'll avouch
In my most sober mood, ne'er trust me else.

THE HAZARD-TABLE.

"AND how doth your kinsman, good mine host?" said Tressilian, when Giles Gosling first appeared in the public room on the morning following the revel which we described in the last chapter. "Is he well, and will he abide by his wager?"

"For well, sir, he started two hours since, and has visited I know not what purlieus of his old companions; hath but now returned, and is at this instant breakfasting on new-laid eggs and muscadine; and for his wager, I caution you as a friend to have little to do with that, or indeed aught that Mike proposes. Wherefore, I counsel you to a warm breakfast upon a culiss, which shall restore the tone of the stomach; and let my nephew and Master Goldthred swagger about their wager as they list."

"It seems to me, mine host," said Tressilian, "that you know not well what to say about this kinsman of yours; and that you can neither blame nor commend him without some twinge of conscience."

"You have spoken truly, Master Tressilian," replied

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Giles Gosling. "There is natural affection whimpering into one ear, 'Giles, Giles, why wilt thou take away the good name of thy own nephew? Wilt thou defame thy sister's son, Giles Gosling? wilt thou defoul thine own nest, dishonour thine own blood?' And then, again, comes Justice, and says, 'Here is a worthy guest as ever came to the bonny Black Bear; one who never challenged a reckoning,' (as I say to your face you never did, Master Tressilian—not that you have had cause,) 'one who knows not why he came, so far as I can see, or when he is going away; and wilt thou, being a publican, having paid scot and lot these thirty years in the town of Cumnor, and being at this instant head-borough, wilt thou suffer this guest of guests, this man of men, this six-hooped pot (as I may say) of a traveller, to fall into the meshes of thy nephew, who is known for a swasher and a desperate Dick, a carder, and a dicer, a professor of the seven damnable sciences, if ever man took degrees in them?' No, by Heaven! I might wink, and let him catch such a small butterfly as Goldthred; but thou, my guest, shalt be forewarned, forearmed, so thou wilt but listen to thy trusty host."

"Why, mine host, thy counsel shall not be cast away," replied Tressilian; "however, I must uphold my share in this wager, having once passed my word to that effect. But, lend me, I pray, some of thy counsel—This Foster who or what is he, and why makes he such mystery of his female inmate?"

"Troth," replied Gosling, "I can add but little to what you heard last night. He was one of Queen Mary's Papists, and now he is one of Queen Elizabeth's Protestants; he was an on-hanger of the Abbot of Abingdon, and now he lives as master of the Manor-house. Above

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all, he was poor and is rich. Folk talk of private apartments in his old waste mansion-house, bedizened fine enough to serve the Queen, God bless her. Some men think he found a treasure in the orchard, some that he sold himself to the devil for treasure, and some say that he cheated the Abbot out of the church plate, which was hidden in the old Manor-house at the Reformation. Rich, however, he is, and God and his conscience, with the devil perhaps besides, only know how he came by it. He has sulky ways too, breaking off intercourse with all that are of the place, as if he had either some strange secret to keep, or held himself to be made of another clay than we are. I think it likely my kinsman and he will quarrel, if Mike thrust his acquaintance on him; and I am sorry that you, my worthy Master Tressilian, will still think of going in my nephew's company."

Tressilian again answered him, that he would proceed with great caution, and that he should have no fears on his account; in short, he bestowed on him all the customary assurances with which those who are determined on a rash action, are wont to parry the advice of their friends.

Meantime, the traveller accepted the landlord's invitation, and had just finished the excellent breakfast which was served to him and Gosling by pretty Cicely, the beauty of the bar, when the hero of the preceding night, Michael Lambourne, entered the apartment. His toilette had apparently cost him some labour, for his clothes which differed from those he wore on his journey, were of the newest fashion, and put on with great attention to the display of his person.

"By my faith, uncle," said the gallant, "you made a wet night of it, and I feel it followed by a dry morning.

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I will pledge you willingly in a cup of bastard.—How, my pretty coz, Cicely! why, I left you but a child in the cradle, and there thou stand'st in thy velvet waistcoat, as tight a girl as England's sun shines on. Know thy friends and kindred, Cicely, and come hither, child, that I may kiss thee, and give thee my blessing."

"Concern not yourself about Cicely, kinsman," said Giles Gosling, "but e'en let her go her way, o' God's name; for although your mother were her father's sister, yet that shall not make you and her cater-cousins."

"Why, uncle," replied Lambourne, "think'st thou I am an infidel, and would harm those of mine own house?"

"It is for no harm that I speak, Mike," answered his uncle, "but a simple humour of precaution which I have. True, thou art as well gilded as a snake when he casts his old slough in the spring-time; but for all that, thou creepest not into my Eden. I will look after mine Eve, Mike, and so content thee.—But how brave thou be'st, lad! To look on thee now, and compare thee with Master Tressilian here, in his sad-coloured riding-suit, who would not say that thou wert the real gentleman, and he the tapster's boy?"

"Troth, uncle," replied Lambourne, "no one would say so but one of your country breeding, that knows no better. I will say, and I care not who hears me, there is something about the real gentry that few men come up to that are not born and bred to the mystery. I wot not where the trick lies; but although I can enter an ordinary with as much audacity, rebuke the waiters and drawers as loudly, drink as deep a health, swear as round an oath, and fling my gold as freely about as any of the jingling spurs and white feathers that are around me,—yet, hang

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me if I can ever catch the true grace of it, though I have practised an hundred times. The man of the house sets me lowest at the board, and carves to me the last; and the drawer says,—'Coming, friend,' without any more reverence or regardful addition. But hang it, let it pass; care killed a cat. I have gentry enough to pass the trick on Tony Fire-the-Fagot, and that will do for the matter in hand."

"You hold your purpose, then, of visiting your old acquaintance!" said Tressilian to the adventurer.

"Ay, sir," replied Lambourne; "when stakes are made, the game must be played; that is gamester's law, all over the world. You, sir, unless my memory fails me, (for I did steep it somewhat too deeply in the sack-butt,) took some share in my hazard."

"I propose to accompany you in your adventure," said Tressilian, "if you will do me so much grace as to permit me; and I have staked my share of the forfeit in the hands of our worthy host."

"That he hath," answered Giles Gosling, "in as fair Harry-nobles as ever were melted into sack by a good fellow. So, luck to your enterprise, since you will needs venture on Tony Foster; but, by my credit, you had better take another draught before you depart, for your welcome at the Hall, yonder, will be somewhat of the driest. And if you do get into peril, beware of taking to cold steel; but send for me, Giles Gosling the headborough, and I may be able to make something out of Tony yet, for as proud as he is."

The nephew dutifully obeyed his uncle's hint, by taking a second powerful pull at the tankard, observing, that his wit never served him so well as when he had washed his temples with a deep morning's draught;—

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and they set forth together for the habitation of Anthony Foster.

The village of Cumnor is pleasantly built on a hill, and in a wooded park closely adjacent was situated the ancient mansion occupied at this time by Anthony Foster, of which the ruins may be still extant. The park was then full of large trees, and, in particular, of ancient and mighty oaks, which stretched their giant arms over the high walls surrounding the demesne, thus giving it a melancholy, secluded, and monastic appearance. The entrance to the park lay through an old-fashioned gateway in the outer wall, the door of which was formed of two huge oaken leaves, thickly studded with nails, like the gate of an old town.

"We shall be finely holped up here," said Michael Lambourne, looking at the gateway and gate, "if this fellow's suspicious humour should refuse us admission altogether, as it is like he may, in case this linsey-wolsey fellow of a mercer's visit to his premises has disquieted him. But, no," he added, pushing the huge gate, which gave way, "the door stands invitingly open; and here we are within the forbidden ground, without other impediment than the passive resistance of a heavy oak door, moving on rusty hinges."

They stood now in an avenue overshadowed by such old trees as we have described, and which had been bordered at one time by high hedges of yew and holly. But these, having been untrimmed for many years, had run up into great bushes, or rather dwarf-trees, and now encroached with their dark and melancholy boughs upon the road which they once had screened. The avenue itself was grown up with grass, and, in one or two places, interrupted by piles of withered brushwood, which had

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been lopped from the trees cut down in the neighbouring park, and was here stacked for drying. Formal walks and avenues, which, at different points, crossed this principal approach, were, in like manner, choked up and interrupted by piles of brushwood and billets, and in other places by underwood and brambles. Besides the general effect of desolation which is so strongly impressed, whenever we behold the contrivances of man wasted and obliterated by neglect, and witness the marks of social life effaced gradually by the influence of vegetation, the size of the trees, and the outspreading extent of their boughs, diffused a gloom over the scene, even when the sun was at the highest, and made a proportional impression on the mind of those who visited it. This was felt even by Michael Lambourne, however alien his habits were to receiving any impressions, excepting from things which addressed themselves immediately to his passions.

"This wood is as dark as a wolf's mouth," said he to Tressilian, as they walked together slowly along the solitary and broken approach, and had just come in sight of the monastic front of the old mansion, with its shafted windows, brick walls overgrown with ivy and creeping shrubs, and twisted stalks of chimneys of heavy stonework. "And yet," continued Lambourne, "it is fairly done on the part of Foster too; for since he chooses not visiters, it is right to keep his place in a fashion that will invite few to trespass upon his privacy. But had he been the Anthony I once knew him, these sturdy oaks had long since become the property of some honest woodmonger, and the manor-close here had looked lighter at midnight than it now does at noon, while Foster played fast and loose with the price, in some cunning corner in the purlieus of White-friars."

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"Was he then such an unthrift?" asked Tressilian.

"He was," answered Lambourne, "like the rest of us, no saint, and no saver. But what I liked worst of Tony was, that he loved to take his pleasure by himself, and grudged, as men say, every drop of water that went past his own mill. I have known him deal with such measures of wine when he was alone, as I would not have ventured on with aid of the best toper in Berkshire;—that, and some sway towards superstition, which he had by temperament, rendered him unworthy the company of a good fellow. And now he has earthed himself here, in a den just befitting such a sly fox as himself."

"May I ask you, Master Lambourne," said Tressilian, "since your old companion's humour jumps so little with your own, wherefore you are so desirous to renew acquaintance with him?"

"And may I ask you, in return, Master Tressilian," answered Lambourne, "wherefore you have shewn yourself so desirous to accompany me on this party?"

"I told you my motive," said Tressilian, "when I took share in your wager,—it was simple curiosity."

"La you there now!" answered Lambourne: "See how you civil and discreet gentlemen think to use us who live by the free exercise of our wits! Had I answered your question by saying that it was simple curiosity which led me to visit my old comrade Anthony Foster, I warrant you had set it down for an evasion, and a turn of my trade. But any answer, I suppose, must serve my turn."

"And wherefore should not bare curiosity," said Tressilian, "be a sufficient reason for my taking this walk with you?"

"Oh, content yourself, sir," replied Lambourne; "you

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cannot put the change on me so easy as you think, for I have lived among the quick-stirring spirits of the age too long, to swallow chaff for grain. You are a gentleman of birth and breeding—your bearing makes it good; of civil habits and fair reputation—your manners declare it, and my uncle avouches it; and yet you associate yourself with a sort of scant-of-grace, as men call me; and, knowing me to be such, you make yourself my companion in a visit to a man whom you are a stranger to,—and all out of mere curiosity, forsooth!—The excuse, if curiously balanced, would be found to want some scruples of just weight, or so."

"If your suspicions were just," said Tressilian, "you have shewn no confidence in me to invite or deserve mine."

"Oh, if that be all," said Lambourne, "my motives lie above water. While this gold of mine lasts,"—taking out his purse, chucking it into the air, and catching it as it fell,—"I will make it buy pleasure, and when it is out, I must have more. Now, if this mysterious Lady of the Manor—this fair Lindabrides of Tony Fire-the-Fagot, be so admirable a piece as men say, why there's chance that she may aid me to melt my nobles into groats; and, again, if Anthony be so wealthy a chuff as report speaks him, he may prove the philosopher's stone to me, and convert my groats into fair rose-nobles again."

"A comfortable proposal truly," said Tressilian; "but I see not what chance there is of accomplishing it."

"Not to-day, or perchance to-morrow," answered Lambourne; "I expect not to catch the old jack till I have disposed my ground baits handsomely. But I know something more of his affairs this morning than I did last night, and I will so use my knowledge that he shall think

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it more perfect than it is.—Nay, without expecting either pleasure or profit, or both, I had not stepped a stride within this manor, I can tell you; for I promise you I hold our visit not altogether without risk. But here we are, and we must make the best on't."

While he thus spoke, they had entered a large orchard which surrounded the house on two sides, though the trees, abandoned by the care of man, were overgrown and mossy, and seemed to bear little fruit. Those which had been formerly trained as espaliers, had now resumed their natural mode of growing, and exhibited grotesque forms, partaking of the original training which they had received. The greater part of the ground, which had once been parterres and flower-gardens, was suffered in like manner to run to waste, excepting a few patches which had been dug up, and planted with ordinary pot-herbs. Some statues, which had ornamented the garden in its days of splendour, were now thrown down from their pedestals and broken in pieces, and a large summer-house, having a heavy stone front, decorated with carving, representing the life and actions of Samson, was in the same dilapidated condition.

They had just traversed this garden of the sluggard, and were within a few steps of the door of the mansion, when Lambourne had ceased speaking; a circumstance very agreeable to Tressilian, as it saved him the embarrassment of either commenting upon or replying to the frank avowal which his companion had just made of the sentiments and views which induced him to come hither. Lambourne knocked roundly and boldly at the huge door of the mansion, observing at the same time, he had seen a less strong one upon a county jail. It was not until they had knocked more than once, that an aged

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sour-visaged domestic reconnoitred them through a small square hole in the door, well secured with bars of iron, and demanded what they wanted.

"To speak with Master Foster instantly, on pressing business of the state," was the ready reply of Michael Lambourne.

"Methinks you will find difficulty to make that good," said Tressilian in a whisper to his companion, while the servant went to carry the message to his master.

"Tush," replied the adventurer; "no soldier would go on were he always to consider when and how he should come off. Let us once obtain entrance, and all will go well enough."

In a short time the servant returned, and drawing with a careful hand both bolt and bar, opened the gate, which admitted them through an archway into a square court, surrounded by buildings. Opposite to the arch was another door, which the serving-man in like manner unlocked, and thus introduced them into a stone-paved parlour, where there was but little furniture, and that of the rudest and most ancient fashion. The windows were tall and ample, reaching almost to the roof of the room, which was composed of black oak; those opening to the quadrangle were obscured by the height of the surrounding buildings, and, as they were traversed with massive shafts of solid stone-work, and thickly painted with religious devices, and scenes taken from Scripture history, by no means admitted light in proportion to their size; and what did penetrate through them, partook of the dark and gloomy tinge of the stained glass.

Tressilian and his guide had time enough to observe all these particulars, for they waited some space in the apartment ere the present master of the mansion at

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length made his appearance. Prepared as he was to see an inauspicious and ill-looking person, the ugliness of Anthony Foster considerably exceeded what Tressilian had anticipated. He was of middle stature, built strongly, but so clumsily as to border on deformity, and to give all his motions the ungainly awkwardness of a left-legged and left-handed man. His hair, in arranging which, men at that time, as at present, were very nice and curious, instead of being carefully cleaned and disposed into short curls, or else set up on end, as is represented in old paintings, in a manner resembling that used by fine gentlemen of our own day, escaped in sable negligence from under a furred bonnet, and hung in elf-locks, which seemed strangers to the comb, over his rugged brows, and around his very singular and unprepossessing countenance. His keen dark eyes were deep set beneath broad and shaggy eyebrows, and as they were usually bent on the ground, seemed as if they were themselves ashamed of the expression natural to them, and were desirous to conceal it from the observation of men. At times, however, when, more intent on observing others, he suddenly raised them, and fixed them keenly on those with whom he conversed, they seemed to express both the fiercer passions, and the power of mind which could at will suppress or disguise the intensity of inward feeling. The features which corresponded with these eyes and this form were irregular, and marked so as to be indelibly fixed on the mind of him who had once seen them. Upon the whole, as Tressilian could not help acknowledging to himself, the Anthony Foster who now stood before them was the last person, judging from personal appearance, upon whom one would have chosen to intrude an unexpected and undesired visit. His attire was a doublet of russet leather,

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like those worn by the better sort of country folk, girt with a buff belt, in which was stuck on the right side a long knife, or dudgeon dagger, and on the other a cutlass. He raised his eyes as he entered the room, and fixed a keenly penetrating glance upon his two visiters, then cast them down as if counting his steps, while he advanced slowly into the middle of the room, and said, in a low and smothered tone of voice, "Let me pray you, gentlemen, to tell me the cause of this visit."

He looked as if he expected the answer from Tressilian; so true was Lambourne's observation, that the superior air of breeding and dignity shone through the disguise of an inferior dress. But it was Michael who replied to him, with the easy familiarity of an old friend, and a tone which seemed unembarrassed by any doubt of the most cordial reception.

"Ha! my dear friend and ingle, Tony Foster!" he exclaimed, seizing upon the unwilling hand, and shaking it with such emphasis as almost to stagger the sturdy frame of the person whom he addressed; "how fares it with you for many a long year?—What! have you altogether forgotten your friend, gossip, and playfellow, Michael Lambourne?"

"Michael Lambourne!" said Foster, looking at him a moment; then dropping his eyes, and with little ceremony extricating his hand from the friendly grasp of the person by whom he was addressed, "are you Michael Lambourne?"

"Ay; sure as you are Anthony Foster," replied Lambourne.

"'Tis well," answered his sullen host; "and what may Michael Lambourne expect from his visit hither?"

"*Voto a Dios*," answered Lambourne, "I expected a better welcome than I am like to meet, I think."

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"Why, thou gallows-bird—thou jail-rat—thou friend of the hangman and his customers," replied Foster, "hast thou the assurance to expect countenance from any one whose neck is beyond the compass of a Tyburn tippet?"

"It may be with me as you say," replied Lambourne; "and suppose I grant it to be so for argument's sake, I were still good enough society for mine ancient friend Anthony Fire-the-Fagot, though he be, for the present, by some indescribable title, the master of Cumnor-Place."

"Hark you, Michael Lambourne," said Foster; "you are a gambler now, and live by the counting of chances—Compute me the odds that I do not, on this instant, throw you out of that window into the ditch there."

"Twenty to one that you do not," answered the sturdy visiter.

"And wherefore, I pray you?" demanded Anthony Foster, setting his teeth, and compressing his lips, like one who endeavours to suppress some violent internal emotion.

"Because," said Lambourne, coolly, "you dare not for your life lay a finger on me. I am younger and stronger than you, and have in me a double portion of the fighting devil, though not, it may be, quite so much of the undermining fiend, that finds an underground way to his purpose—who hides halters under folk's pillows, and who puts ratsbane into their porridge, as the stage-play says."

Foster looked at him earnestly, then turned away, and paced the room twice, with the same steady and considerate pace with which he had entered it; then suddenly came back, and extended his hand to Michael Lambourne, saying, "Be not wroth with me, good Mike; I did but

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try whether thou hadst parted with aught of thine old and honourable frankness, which your enviers and backbiters called saucy impudence."

"Let them call it what they will," said Michael Lambourne, "it is the commodity we must carry through the world with us.—Uds daggers! I tell thee, man, mine own stock of assurance was too small to trade upon, I was fain to take in a ton or two more of brass at every port where I touched in the voyage of life; and I started overboard what modesty and scruples I had remaining, in order to make room for the stowage."

"Nay, nay," replied Foster, "touching scruples and modesty, you sailed hence in ballast.—But who is this gallant, honest Mike?—is he a Corinthian—a cutter like thyself?"

"I prythee, know Master Tressilian, bully Foster," replied Lambourne, presenting his friend in answer to his friend's question, "know him and honour him, for he is a gentleman of many admirable qualities; and though he traffics not in my line of business, at least so far as I know, he has, nevertheless, a just respect and admiration for artists of our class. He will come to in time, as seldom fails; but as yet he is only a Neophyte, only a proselyte, and frequents the company of cocks of the game, as a puny fencer does the schools of the masters, to see how a foil is handled by the teachers of defence."

"If such be his quality, I will pray your company in another chamber, honest Mike, for what I have to say to thee is for thy private ear.—Meanwhile, I pray you, sir, to abide us in this apartment, and without leaving it—there be those in this house who would be alarmed by the sight of a stranger."

Tressilian acquiesced, and the two worthies left the

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apartment together, in which he remained alone to await their return.*

* If faith is to be put in epitaphs, Anthony Foster was something the very reverse of the character represented in the novel. Ashmole gives this description of his tomb. I copy from the Antiquities of Berkshire, vol. i. p. 148.

"In the north wall of the chancel at Cumnor church, is a monument of gray marble, whereon, in brass plates, are engraved a man in armour, and his wife in the habit of her times, both kneeling before a fald-stoole, together with the figures of three sons kneeling behind their mother. Under the figure of the man is this inscription:

ANTONIUS FORSTER, generis generosa propago,
Cumneræ Dominus, Bercheriensis erat.
Armiger, Armigero proguatus patre Ricardo,
Qui quondam Iphlethæ Salopiensis erat.
Quatuor ex isto fluxerunt stemmate nati,
Ex isto Antonius stemmate quartus erat.
Mente sagax, animo precellens, corpore promptus;
Eloquii dulcis, ore disertus erat.
In factis probitas; fuit in sermone venustas,
In vultu gravitas, relligione fides,
In patriam pietas, in egenos grata voluntas,
Accedunt reliquis annumeranda bonis.
Si quod cuncta rapit, rapuit non omnia Lethum,
Si quod Mors rapuit, vivida fama dedit.
* * * * *

"These verses following are writ at length, two by two, in praise of him:

Argute resonas Cithare pretendere chordas
Novit, et Aonia concrepuisse Lyra.
Gaudebat terre teneras defigere plantas;
Et mira pulchras construere arte domos,
Composita varias lingua formare loquelas
Doctus, et edocta scribere multa manu.

"The arms over it thus:

Quart. { I. 3 *Hunter's Horns* stringed.
II. 3 *Pinions* with their points upwards.

"The crest is a *Stag* couchant, vulnerated through the neck by a broad arrow; on his side is a *Martlett* for a difference."

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From this monumental inscription it appears, that Anthony Forster, instead of being a vulgar, low-bred, puritanical churl, was in fact a gentleman of birth and consideration, distinguished for his skill in the arts of music and horticulture, as also in languages. In so far, therefore, the Anthony Foster of the romance has nothing but the name in common with the real individual. But notwithstanding the charity, benevolence, and religious faith imputed by the monument of gray marble to its tenant, tradition, as well as secret history, name him as the active agent in the death of the Countess; and it is added, that from being a jovial and convivial gallant, as we may infer from some expressions in the epitaph, he sunk, after the fatal deed, into a man of gloomy and retired habits, whose looks and manners indicated that he suffered under the pressure of some atrocious secret.

The name of Lambourne is still known in the vicinity, and it is said some of the clan partake the habits, as well as name of the Michael Lambourne of the romance. A man of this name lately murdered his wife, outdoing Michael in this respect, who only was concerned in the murder of the wife of another man.

I have only to add, that the jolly Black Bear has been restored to his predominance over bowl and bottle, in the village of Cumnor.

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CHAPTER IV.

Not serve two masters?—Here's a youth will try it—
Would fain serve God, yet give the devil his due;
Says grace before he doth a deed of villany,
And returns his thanks devoutly when 'tis acted.

OLD PLAY.

THE room into which the Master of Cumnor-Place conducted his worthy visitant, was of greater extent than that in which they had at first conversed, and had yet more the appearance of dilapidation. Large oaken presses, filled with shelves of the same wood, surrounded the room, and had, at one time, served for the arrangement of a numerous collection of books, many of which yet remained, but torn and defaced, covered with dust, deprived of their costly clasps and bindings, and tossed together in heaps upon the shelves, as things altogether disregarded, and abandoned to the pleasure of every spoiler. The very presses themselves seemed to have incurred the hostility of those enemies of learning, who had destroyed the volumes with which they had been heretofore filled. They were, in several places, dismantled of their shelves, and otherwise broken and damaged, and were, moreover, mantled with cobwebs, and covered with dust.

"The men who wrote these books," said Lambourne, looking round him, "little thought whose keeping they were to fall into."

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"Nor what yeoman's service they were to do me," quoth Anthony Foster—"the cook hath used them for scouring his pewter, and the groom hath had nought else to clean my boots with this many a month past."

"And yet," said Lambourne, "I have been in cities where such learned commodities would have been deemed too good for such offices."

"Pshaw, pshaw," answered Foster, "they are Popish trash, every one of them,—private studies of the mumping old Abbot of Abingdon. The nineteenthly of a pure gospel sermon were worth a cart-load of such rakings of the kennel of Rome."

"Gad-a-mercy, Master Tony Fire-the-Fagot!" said Lambourne, by way of reply.

Foster scowled darkly at him, as he replied, "Hark ye, friend Mike; forget that name, and the passage which it relates to, if you would not have our newly revived comradeship die a sudden and a violent death."

"Why," said Michael Lambourne, "you were wont to glory in the share you had in the death of the two old heretical bishops."

"That," said his comrade, "was while I was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and applies not to my walk or my ways, now that I am called forth into the lists. Mr. Melchisedek Maultext compared my misfortune in that matter to that of the Apostle Paul, who kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned Saint Stephen. He held forth on the matter three Sabbaths past, and illustrated the same by the conduct of an honourable person present, meaning me."

"I prithee peace, Foster," said Lambourne, "for I know not how it is, I have a sort of creeping comes over my skin when I hear the devil quote Scripture; and be-

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sides, man, how couldst thou have the heart to quit that convenient old religion, which you could so slip off or on as easily as your glove? Do I not remember how you were wont to carry your conscience to confession, as duly as the month came round? and when thou hadst it scoured, and burnished, and whitewashed by the priest, thou wert ever ready for the worst villany which could be devised, like a child who is always readiest to rush into the mire when he has got his Sunday's clean jerkin on."

"Trouble not thyself about my conscience," said Foster, "it is a thing thou canst not understand, having never had one of thine own; but let us rather to the point, and say to me in one word, what is thy business with me, and what hopes have drawn thee hither?"

"The hope of bettering myself, to be sure," answered Lambourne, "as the old woman said, when she leapt over the bridge at Kingston. Look you, this purse has all that is left of as round a sum as a man would wish to carry in his slop-pouch. You are here well established, it would seem, and, as I think, well befriended, for men talk of your being under some special protection; nay, stare not like a pig that is stuck, mon, thou canst not dance in a net and they not see thee. Now I know such protection is not purchased for nought; you must have services to render for it, and in these I propose to help thee."

"But how if I lack no assistance from thee, Mike? I think thy modesty might suppose that were a case possible."

"That is to say," retorted Lambourne, "that you would engross the whole work, rather than divide the reward—but be not over-greedy, Anthony. Covetousness bursts the sack, and spills the grain. Look you, when the huntsman goes to kill a stag, he takes with him more dogs than

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one.—He has the stanch lyme-hound to track the wounded buck over hill and dale, but he hath also the fleet gaze-hound to kill him at view. Thou art the lyme-hound, I am the gaze-hound, and thy patron will need the aid of both, and can well afford to requite it. Thou hast deep sagacity—and unrelenting purpose—a steady long-breathed malignity of nature, that surpasses mine. But then, I am the bolder, the more ready, both at action and expedient. Separate, our properties are not so perfect; but unite them, and we drive the world before us. How sayest thou—shall we hunt in couples?"

"It is a currish proposal—thus to thrust thyself upon my private matters," replied Foster; "but thou wert ever an ill-nurtured whelp."

"You shall have no cause to say so, unless you spurn my courtesy," said Michael Lambourne; "but if so, keep thee well from me, Sir Knight, as the romance has it. I will either share your counsels or traverse them; for I have come here to be busy, either with thee or against thee."

"Well," said Anthony Foster, "since thou dost leave me so fair a choice, I will rather be thy friend than thine enemy. Thou art right; I *can* prefer thee to the service of a patron, who has enough of means to make us both, and an hundred more. And, to say truth, thou art well qualified for his service. Boldness and dexterity he demands—the justice-books bear witness in thy favour; no starting at scruples in his service—why, who ever suspected thee of a conscience?—an assurance he must have, who would follow a courtier—and thy brow is as impenetrable as a Milan visor. There is but one thing I would fain see amended in thee."

"And what is that, my most precious friend Anthony?" replied Lambourne; "for I swear by the pillow

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of the Seven Sleepers, I will not be slothful in amending it."

"Why, you gave a sample of it even now," said Foster. "Your speech twangs too much of the old stamp, and you garnish it ever and anon with singular oaths that savour of Papistrie. Besides, your exterior man is altogether too deboshed and irregular to become one of his lordship's followers, since he has a reputation to keep up in the eye of the world. You must somewhat reform your dress, upon a more grave and composed fashion; wear your cloak on both shoulders, and your falling band unrumpled and well starched—You must enlarge the brim of your beaver, and diminish the superfluity of your trunk-hose—go to church, or, which will be better, to meeting, at least once a-month—protest only upon your faith and conscience—lay aside your swashing look, and never touch the hilt of your sword, but when you would draw the carnal weapon in good earnest."

"By this light, Anthony, thou art mad," answered Lambourne, "and hast described rather the gentleman-usher to a puritan's wife, than the follower of an ambitious courtier! Yes, such a thing as thou wouldst make of me, should wear a book at his girdle, instead of a poniard, and might just be suspected of manhood enough to squire a proud dame-citizen to the lecture at Saint Antonlin's, and quarrel in her cause with any flat-capp'd thread-maker that would take the wall of her. He must ruffle it in another sort that would walk to court in a nobleman's train."

"Oh, content you, sir," replied Foster, "there is a change since you knew the English world; and there are those who can hold their way through the boldest courses, and the most secret, and yet never a swaggering

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word, or an oath, or a profane word in their conversation."

"That is to say," replied Lambourne, "they are in a trading copartnery, to do the devil's business without mentioning his name in the firm?—Well, I will do my best to counterfeit rather than lose ground in this new world, since thou sayest it is grown so precise. But, Anthony, what is the name of this nobleman, in whose service I am to turn hypocrite?"

"Aha! Master Michael, are you there with your bears?" said Foster, with a grim smile; "and is this the knowledge you pretend of my concernments?—How know you now there is such a person *in rerum natura*, and that I have not been putting a jape upon you all this time?"

"Thou put a jape on me, thou sodden-brained gull?" answered Lambourne, nothing daunted; "why, dark and muddy as thou think'st thyself, I would engage in a day's space to see as clear through thee and thy concernments, as thou call'st them, as through the filthy horn of an old stable lantern."

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by a scream from the next apartment.

"By the holy Cross of Abingdon," exclaimed Anthony Foster, forgetting his Protestantism in his alarm, "I am a ruined man!"

So saying, he rushed into the apartment whence the scream issued, followed by Michael Lambourne. But to account for the sounds which interrupted their conversation, it is necessary to recede a little way in our narrative.

It has been already observed, that when Lambourne accompanied Foster into the Library, they left Tressilian

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alone in the ancient parlour. His dark eye followed them forth of the apartment with a glance of contempt, a part of which his mind instantly transferred to himself, for having stooped to be even for a moment their familiar companion. "These are the associates, Amy,"—it was thus he communed with himself,—"to which thy cruel levity—thine unthinking and most unmerited falsehood, has condemned him, of whom his friends once hoped for other things, and who now scorns himself as he will be scorned by others, for the baseness he stoops to for the love of thee! But I will not leave the pursuit of thee, once the object of my purest and most devoted affection, though to me thou canst henceforth be nothing but a thing to weep over—I will save thee from thy betrayer, and from thyself—I will restore thee to thy parents—to thy God. I cannot bid the bright star again sparkle in the sphere it has shot from, but——"

A slight noise in the apartment interrupted his reverie; he looked round, and in the beautiful and richly-attired female who entered at that instant by a side-door, he recognised the object of his search. The first impulse arising from this discovery, urged him to conceal his face with the collar of his cloak, until he should find a favourable moment of making himself known. But his purpose was disconcerted by the young lady, (she was not above eighteen years old,) who ran joyfully towards him, and pulling him by the cloak, said playfully, "Nay, my sweet friend, after I have waited for you so long, you come not to my bower to play the masquer—You are arraigned of treason to true love and fond affection; and you must stand up at the bar, and answer it with face uncovered—how say you, guilty or not?"

"Alas, Amy!" said Tressilian, in a low and melan-

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choly tone, as he suffered her to draw the mantle from his face. The sound of his voice, and still more the unexpected sight of his face, changed in an instant the lady's playful mood—She staggered back, turned as pale as death, and put her hands before her face. Tressilian was himself for a moment much overcome, but seeming suddenly to remember the necessity of using an opportunity which might not again occur, he said in a low tone, "Amy, fear me not."

"Why should I fear you?" said the lady, withdrawing her hands from her beautiful face, which was now covered with crimson,—"why should I fear you, Mr. Tressilian?—or wherefore have you intruded yourself into my dwelling, uninvited, sir, and unwished for?"

"Your dwelling, Amy!" said Tressilian. "Alas! is a prison your dwelling?—a prison, guarded by one of the most sordid of men, but not a greater wretch than his employer!"

"This house is mine," said Amy, "mine while I choose to inhabit it—If it is my pleasure to live in seclusion, who shall gainsay me?"

"Your father, maiden," answered Tressilian, "your broken-hearted father; who despatched me in quest of you with that authority which he cannot exert in person. Here is his letter, written while he blessed his pain of body which somewhat stunned the agony of his mind."

"The pain!—is my father then ill?" said the lady.

"So ill," answered Tressilian, "that even your utmost haste may not restore him to health, but all shall be instantly prepared for your departure the instant you yourself will give consent."

"Tressilian," answered the lady, "I cannot, I must not, I dare not leave this place. Go back to my father—

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tell him I will obtain leave to see him within twelve hours from hence. Go back, Tressilian—tell him I am well, I am happy—happy could I think he was so—tell him not to fear that I will come, and in such a manner that all the grief Amy has given him shall be forgotten—the poor Amy is now greater than she dare name.—Go, good Tressilian—I have injured thee too, but believe me I have power to heal the wounds I have caused—I robbed you of a childish heart, which was not worthy of you, and I can repay the loss with honours and advancement."

"Do you say this to me, Amy?—Do you offer me pageants of idle ambition, for the quiet peace you have robbed me of?—But be it so—I came not to upbraid, but to serve and to free you.—You cannot disguise it from me; you are a prisoner. Otherwise your kind heart—for it was once a kind heart—would have been already at your father's bed-side.—Come—poor, deceived, unhappy maiden!—all shall be forgot—all shall be forgiven. Fear not my importunity for what regarded our contract—it was a dream, and I have awaked—But come—your father yet lives—Come, and one word of affection—one tear of penitence, will efface the memory of all that has passed."

"Have I not already said, Tressilian," replied she, "that I will surely come to my father, and that without farther delay than is necessary to discharge other and equally binding duties—Go, carry him the news—I come as sure as there is light in heaven—that is, when I obtain permission."

"Permission!—permission to visit your father on his sick-bed, perhaps on his death-bed!" repeated Tressilian, impatiently; "and permission from whom?—From the

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villain who, under disguise of friendship, abused every duty of hospitality, and stole thee from thy father's roof!"

"Do him no slander, Tressilian!—He whom thou speakest of wears a sword as sharp as thine—sharper, vain man—for the best deeds thou hast ever done in peace or war, were as unworthy to be named with his, as thy obscure rank to match itself with the sphere he moves in.—Leave me! Go, do mine errand to my father, and when he next sends to me, let him choose a more welcome messenger."

"Amy," replied Tressilian, calmly, "thou canst not move me by thy reproaches.—Tell me one thing, that I may bear at least one ray of comfort to my aged friend—This rank of his which thou dost boast—dost thou share it with him, Amy?—Does he claim a husband's right to control thy motions?"

"Stop thy base unmannered tongue!" said the lady; "to no question that derogates from my honour, do I deign an answer."

"You have said enough in refusing to reply," answered Tressilian; "and mark me, unhappy as thou art, I am armed with thy father's full authority to command thy obedience, and I will save thee from the slavery of sin and of sorrow, even despite of thyself, Amy."

"Menace no violence here!" exclaimed the lady, drawing back from him, and alarmed at the determination expressed in his look and manner; "threaten me not, Tressilian, for I have means to repel force."

"But not, I trust, the wish to use them in so evil a cause?" said Tressilian. "With thy will—thine uninfluenced, free, and natural will, Amy, thou canst not choose this state of slavery and dishonour—thou hast been bound by some spell—entrapped by some deceit—

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art now detained by some compelled vow.—But thus I break the charm—Amy, in the name of thine excellent, thy broken-hearted father, I command thee to follow me!"

As he spoke, he advanced and extended his arm, as with the purpose of laying hold upon her. But she shrunk back from his grasp, and uttered the scream which, as we before noticed, brought into the apartment Lambourne and Foster.

The latter exclaimed, as soon as he entered, "Fire and fagot! what have we here?" Then addressing the lady in a tone betwixt entreaty and command, he added, "Uds precious! madam, what make you here out of bounds?—Retire—retire—there is life and death in this matter.—And you, friend, whoever you may be, leave this house—out with you, before my dagger's hilt and your costard become acquainted—Draw, Mike, and rid us of the knave!"

"Not I, on my soul," replied Lambourne; "he came hither in my company, and he is safe from me by cutter's law, at least till we meet again.—But hark ye, my Cornish comrade, you have brought a Cornish flaw of wind with you hither, a hurricanoe as they call it in the Indies. Make yourself scarce—depart—vanish—or we'll have you summoned before the Mayor of Halgaver, and that before Dudman and Ramhead meet." *

"Away, base groom!" said Tressilian—"And you, madam, fare you well—what life lingers in your father's bosom will leave him at the news I have to tell."

He departed, the lady saying faintly as he left the room, "Tressilian, be not rash—say no scandal of me."

* Two headlands on the Cornish coast. The expressions are proverbial.

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"Here is proper gear," said Foster. "I pray you go to your chamber, my lady, and let us consider how this is to be answered—nay, tarry not."

"I move not at your command, sir," answered the lady.

"Nay, but you must, fair lady," replied Foster; "excuse my freedom, but, by blood and nails, this is no time to strain courtesies—you *must* go to your chamber.—Mike, follow that meddling coxcomb, and as you desire to thrive, see him safely clear of the premises, while I bring this headstrong lady to reason.—Draw thy tool, man, and after him."

"I'll follow him," said Michael Lambourne, "and see him fairly out of Flanders—But for hurting a man I have drunk my morning's draught withal, 'tis clean against my conscience." So saying, he left the apartment.

Tressilian, meanwhile, with hasty steps, pursued the first path which promised to conduct him through the wild and overgrown part in which the mansion of Foster was situated. Haste and distress of mind led his steps astray, and instead of taking the avenue which led towards the village, he chose another, which, after he had pursued it for some time with a hasty and reckless step, conducted him to the other side of the demesne, where a postern-door opened through the wall, and led into the open country.

Tressilian paused an instant. It was indifferent to him by what road he left a spot, now so odious to his recollections; but it was probable that the postern-door was locked, and his retreat by that pass rendered impossible.

"I must make the attempt, however," he said to himself; "the only means of reclaiming this lost—this mis-

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erable—this still most lovely and most unhappy girl—must rest in her father's appeal to the broken laws of his country—I must haste to apprize him of this heart-rending intelligence."

As Tressilian, thus conversing with himself, approached to try some means of opening the door, or climbing over it, he perceived there was a key put into the lock from the outside. It turned round, the bolt revolved, and a cavalier, who entered, muffled in his riding-cloak, and wearing a slouched hat, with a drooping feather, stood at once within four yards of him who was desirous of going out. They exclaimed at once, in tones of resentment and surprise, the one "Varney!" the other "Tressilian!"

"What make you here?" was the stern question put by the stranger to Tressilian, when the moment of surprise was passed,—"What make you here, where your presence is neither expected nor desired?"

"Nay, Varney," replied Tressilian, "what make *you* here? Are you come to triumph over the innocence you have destroyed, as the vulture or carrion-crow comes to batten on the lamb, whose eyes it has first plucked out?—Or are you come to encounter the merited vengeance of an honest man?—Draw, dog, and defend thyself!"

Tressilian drew his sword as he spoke, but Varney only laid his hand on the hilt of his own, as he replied, "Thou art mad, Tressilian—I own appearances are against me, but by every oath a priest can make, or a man can swear, Mistress Amy Robsart hath had no injury from me; and in truth I were somewhat loath to hurt you in this cause—Thou know'st I can fight."

"I have heard thee say so, Varney," replied Tressilian; "but now, methinks, I would fain have some better evidence than thine own word."

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"That shall not be lacking, if blade and hilt be but true to me," answered Varney; and drawing his sword with the right hand, he threw his cloak around his left, and attacked Tressilian with a vigour which, for a moment, seemed to give him the advantage of the combat. But this advantage lasted not long. Tressilian added to a spirit determined on revenge, a hand and eye admirably well adapted to the use of the rapier; so that Varney, finding himself hard pressed in his turn, endeavoured to avail himself of his superior strength, by closing with his adversary. For this purpose he hazarded the receiving one of Tressilian's passes in his cloak, wrapt as it was around his arm, and ere his adversary could extricate his rapier thus entangled, he closed with him, shortening his own sword at the same time, with the purpose of despatching him. But Tressilian was on his guard, and unsheathing his poniard, parried with the blade of that weapon the home-thrust which would otherwise have finished the combat, and, in the struggle which followed, displayed so much address, as might have confirmed the opinion that he drew his origin from Cornwall, whose natives are such masters in the art of wrestling, as, were the games of antiquity revived, might enable them to challenge all Europe to the ring. Varney, in his ill-advised attempt, received a fall so sudden and violent, that his sword flew several paces from his hand, and ere he could recover his feet, that of his antagonist was pointed to his throat.

"Give me the instant means of relieving the victim of thy treachery," said Tressilian, "or take the last look of your Creator's blessed sun!"

And while Varney, too confused or too sullen to reply, made a sudden effort to arise, his adversary drew back his arm, and would have executed his threat, but that the

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blow was arrested by the grasp of Michael Lambourne, who, directed by the clashing of swords, had come up just in time to save the life of Varney.

"Come, come, comrade," said Lambourne, "here is enough done and more than enough—put up your fox, and let us be jogging—The Black Bear growls for us."

"Off, abject!" said Tressilian, striking himself free of Lambourne's grasp; "darest thou come betwixt me and mine enemy?"

"Abject! abject!" repeated Lambourne; "that shall be answered with cold steel whenever a bowl of sack has washed out memory of the morning's draught that we had together. In the meanwhile, do you see, shog—tramp—begone—we are two to one."

He spoke truth, for Varney had taken the opportunity to regain his weapon, and Tressilian perceived it was madness to press the quarrel farther against such odds. He took his purse from his side, and taking out two gold nobles, flung them to Lambourne; "There, caitiff, is thy morning wage—thou shalt not say thou hast been my guide unhired. Varney, farewell—we shall meet where there are none to come betwixt us." So saying, he turned round and departed through the postern-door.

Varney seemed to want the inclination, or perhaps the power (for his fall had been a severe one) to follow his retreating enemy. But he glared darkly as he disappeared, and then addressed Lambourne; "Art thou a comrade of Foster's, good fellow?"

"Sworn friends, as the haft is to the knife," replied Michael Lambourne.

"Here is a broad piece for thee—follow yonder fellow and see where he takes earth, and bring me word up to

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the mansion-house here. Cautious and silent, thou knave, as thou valuest thy throat."

"Enough said," replied Lambourne; "I can draw on a scent as well as a sleuth-hound."

"Begone, then," said Varney, sheathing his rapier; and, turning his back on Michael Lambourne, he walked slowly towards the house. Lambourne stopped but an instant to gather the nobles which his late companion had flung towards him so unceremoniously, and muttered to himself, while he put them up in his purse along with the gratuity of Varney, "I spoke to yonder gulls of Eldorado —By Saint Anthony, there is no Eldorado for men of our stamp equal to bonny Old England! It rains nobles, by Heaven—they lie on the grass as thick as dew-drops —you may have them for gathering. And if I have not my share of such glittering dew-drops, may my sword melt like an icicle!"

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CHAPTER V.

——He was a man
Versed in the world as pilot in his compass.
The needle pointed ever to that interest
Which was his loadstar, and he spread his sails
With vantage to the gale of other's passion.

THE DECEIVER—A TRAGEDY.

ANTHONY FOSTER was still engaged in debate with his fair guest, who treated with scorn every entreaty and request that she would retire to her own apartment, when a whistle was heard at the entrance-door of the mansion.

"We are fairly sped now," said Foster; "yonder is thy lord's signal, and what to say about the disorder which has happened in this household, by my conscience, I know not. Some evil fortune dogs the heels of that unhanged rogue Lambourne, and he has 'scaped the gallows against every chance, to come back and be the ruin of me!"

"Peace, sir," said the lady, "and undo the gate to your master.—My lord! my dear lord!" she then exclaimed, hastening to the entrance of the apartment; then added, with a voice expressive of disappointment,—"Pooh! it is but Richard Varney!"

"Ay, madam," said Varney, entering and saluting the lady with a respectful obeisance, which she returned with a careless mixture of negligence and of displeasure. "It is but Richard Varney; but even the first gray cloud

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should be acceptable, when it lightens in the east, because it announces the approach of the blessed sun."

"How! comes my lord hither to-night?" said the lady, in joyful, yet startled agitation; and Anthony Foster caught up the word, and echoed the question. Varney replied to the lady, that his lord purposed to attend her, and would have proceeded with some compliment, when, running to the door of the parlour, she called aloud, "Janet—Janet—come to my tiring-room instantly." Then returning to Varney, she asked if her lord sent any farther commendations to her.

"This letter, honoured madam," said he, taking from his bosom a small parcel wrapt in scarlet silk, "and with it a token to the Queen of his Affections." With eager speed the lady hastened to undo the silken string which surrounded the little packet, and failing to unloose readily the knot with which it was secured, she again called loudly on Janet, "Bring me a knife—scissors—aught that may undo this envious knot!"

"May not my poor poniard serve, honoured madam," said Varney, presenting a small dagger of exquisite workmanship, which hung in his turkey-leather sword-belt.

"No, sir," replied the lady, rejecting the instrument which he offered—"Steel poniard shall cut no true love-knot of mine."

"It has cut many, however," said Anthony Foster, half aside, and looking at Varney. By this time the knot was disentangled without any other help than the neat and nimble fingers of Janet, a simply-attired pretty maiden, the daughter of Anthony Foster, who came running at the repeated call of her mistress. A necklace of orient pearl, the companion of a perfumed billet, was now hastily produced from the packet. The lady gave the

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one, after a slight glance, to the charge of her attendant, while she read, or rather devoured, the contents of the other.

"Surely, lady," said Janet, gazing with admiration at the neck-string of pearls, "the daughters of Tyre wore no fairer neck-jewels than those—And then the posy, 'For a neck that is fairer,'—each pearl is worth a freehold."

"Each word in this dear paper, is worth the whole string, my girl—But come to my tiring-room, girl; we must be brave, my lord comes hither to-night.—He bids me grace you, Master Varney, and to me his wish is a law.—I bid you to a collation in my bower this afternoon, and you too, Master Foster. Give orders that all is fitting, and that suitable preparations be made for my lord's reception to-night." With these words she left the apartment.

"She takes state on her already," said Varney, "and distributes the favour of her presence, as if she were already the partner of his dignity.—Well—it is wise to practise beforehand the part which fortune prepares us to play—the young eagle must gaze at the sun, ere he soars on strong wing to meet it."

"If holding her head aloft," said Foster, "will keep her eyes from dazzling, I warrant you the dame will not stoop her crest. She will presently soar beyond reach of my whistle, Master Varney. I promise you, she holds me already in slight regard."

"It is thine own fault, thou sullen uninventive companion," answered Varney, "who know'st no mode of control, save downright brute force.—Canst thou not make home pleasant to her, with music and toys? Canst thou not make the out-of-doors frightful to her, with tales

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of goblins?—Thou livest here by the churchyard, and hast not even wit enough to raise a ghost, to scare thy females into good discipline."

"Speak not thus, Master Varney," said Foster, "the living I fear not, but I trifle not nor toy with my dead neighbours of the churchyard. I promise you, it requires a good heart to live so near it: worthy Master Holdforth, the afternoon's lecturer of Saint Antonlin's, had a sore fright there the last time he came to visit me."

"Hold thy superstitious tongue!" answered Varney; "and while thou talk'st of visiting, answer me, thou paltering knave, how came Tressilian to be at the postern-door!"

"Tressilian!" answered Foster, "what know I of Tressilian?—I never heard his name."

"Why, villain, it was the very Cornish chough, to whom old Sir Hugh Robsart destined his pretty Amy, and hither the hot-brained fool has come to look after his fair runaway: there must be some order taken with him, for he thinks he hath wrong, and is not the mean hind that will sit down with it. Luckily he knows not of my lord, but thinks he has only me to deal with. But how, in the fiend's name, came he hither?"

"Why, with Mike Lambourne, an you must know," answered Foster.

"And who is Mike Lambourne?" demanded Varney. "By Heaven! thou wert best set up a bush over thy door, and invite every stroller who passes by, to see what thou shouldst keep secret even from the sun and air."

"Ay! ay! this is a court-like requital of my service to you, Master Richard Varney," replied Foster. "Didst thou not charge me to seek out for thee a fellow who had a good sword, and an unscrupulous conscience? and was

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I not busying myself to find a fit man—for, thank Heaven, my acquaintance lies not amongst such companions—when, as Heaven would have it, this tall fellow, who is in all his qualities the very flashing knave thou didst wish, came hither to fix acquaintance upon me in the plenitude of his impudence, and I admitted his claim, thinking to do you a pleasure—and now see what thanks I get for disgracing myself by converse with him!"

"And did he," said Varney, "being such a fellow as thyself, only lacking, I suppose, thy present humour of hypocrisy, which lies as thin over thy hard ruffianly heart as gold lacquer upon rusty iron—did he, I say, bring the saintly, sighing Tressilian in his train?"

"They came together, by Heaven!" said Foster; "and Tressilian—to speak Heaven's truth—obtained a moment's interview with our pretty moppet, while I was talking apart with Lambourne."

"Improvident villain! we are both undone," said Varney. "She has of late been casting many a backward look to her father's halls, whenever her lordly lover leaves her alone. Should this preaching fool whistle her back to her old perch, we were but lost men."

"No fear of that, my master," replied Anthony Foster; "she is in no mood to stoop to his lure, for she yelled out on seeing him as if an adder had stung her."

"That is good.—Canst thou not get from thy daughter an inkling of what passed between them, good Foster?"

"I tell you plain, Master Varney," said Foster, "my daughter shall not enter our purposes, or walk in our paths. They may suit me well enough, who know how to repent of my misdoings; but I will not have my child's soul committed to peril either for your pleasure or my

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lord's. I may walk among snares and pit-falls myself, because I have discretion, but I will not trust the poor lamb among them."

"Why, thou suspicious fool, I were as averse as thou art that thy baby-faced girl should enter into my plans, or walk to hell at her father's elbow. But indirectly thou mightst gain some intelligence of her."

"And so I did, Master Varney," answered Foster; "and she said her lady called out upon the sickness of her father."

"Good!" replied Varney; "that is a hint worth catching, and I will work upon it. But the country must be rid of this Tressilian—I would have cumbered no man about the matter, for I hate him like strong poison—his presence is hemlock to me—and this day I had been rid of him, but that my foot slipped, when, to speak truth, had not thy comrade yonder come to my aid, and held his hand, I should have known by this time whether you and I have been treading the path to heaven or hell."

"And you can speak thus of such a risk!" said Foster. "You keep a stout heart, Master Varney—for me, if I did not hope to live many years, and to have time for the great work of repentance, I would not go forward with you."

"Oh! thou shalt live as long as Methuselah," said Varney, "and amass as much wealth as Solomon; and thou shalt repent so devoutly, that thy repentance shall be more famous than thy villany,—and that is a bold word. But for all this, Tressilian must be looked after. Thy ruffian yonder is gone to dog him. It concerns our fortunes, Anthony."

"Ay, ay," said Foster, sullenly, "this it is to be leagued with one who knows not even so much of Scrip-

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ture, as that the labourer is worthy of his hire. I must, as usual, take all the trouble and risk."

"Risk! and what is the mighty risk, I pray you?" answered Varney. "This fellow will come prowling again about your demesne or into your house, and if you take him for a housebreaker, or a park-breaker, is it not most natural you should welcome him with cold steel or hot lead? Even a mastiff will pull down those who come near his kennel; and who will blame him?"

"Ay, I have mastiff's work and mastiff's wage among you," said Foster. "Here have you, Master Varney, secured a good freehold estate out of this old superstitious foundation; and I have but a poor lease of this mansion under you, voidable at your honour's pleasure."

"Ay, and thou wouldst fain convert thy leasehold into a copyhold—the thing may chance to happen, Anthony Foster, if thou dost good service for it. But softly, good Anthony—it is not the lending a room or two of this old house for keeping my lord's pretty paroquet—nay, it is not the shutting thy doors and windows to keep her from flying off, that may deserve it. Remember, the manor and tithes are rated at the clear annual value of seventy-nine pounds five shillings and fivepence half-penny, besides the value of the wood. Come, come, thou must be conscionable; great and secret service may deserve both this and a better thing.—And now let thy knave come and pluck off my boots.—Get us some dinner, and a cup of thy best wine.—I must visit this mavis, brave in apparel, unruffled in aspect, and gay in temper."

They parted, and at the hour of noon, which was then that of dinner, they again met at their meal, Varney gaily dressed like a courtier of the time, and even Anthony Foster improved in appearance as far as dress could amend an exterior so unfavourable.

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This alteration did not escape Varney. When the meal was finished, the cloth removed, and they were left to their private discourse—"Thou art gay as a goldfinch, Anthony," said Varney, looking at his host; "methinks, thou wilt whistle a jig anon—but I crave your pardon, that would secure your ejection from the congregation of the zealous botchers, the pure-hearted weavers, and the sanctified bakers of Abingdon, who let their ovens cool while their brains get heated."

"To answer you in the spirit, Master Varney," said Foster, "were—excuse the parable—to fling sacred and precious things before swine. So I will speak to thee in the language of the world, which he, who is King of the World, hath taught thee to understand, and to profit by in no common measure."

"Say what thou wilt, honest Tony," replied Varney; "for be it according to thine absurd faith, or according to thy most villanous practice, it cannot choose but be rare matter to qualify this cup of Alicant. Thy conversation is relishing and poignant, and beats caviare, dried neat's-tongue, and all other provocatives that give savour to good liquor."

"Well, then, tell me," said Anthony Foster, "is not our good lord and master's turn better served, and his ante-chamber more suitably filled with decent, God-fearing men, who will work his will and their own profit quietly, and without worldly scandal, than that he should be manned, and attended, and followed by such open de-bauchers and ruffianly swordsmen as Tidesly, Killegrew, this fellow Lambourne, whom you have put me to seek out for you, and other such, who bear the gallows in their face and murder in their right hand—who are a terror to peaceable men, and a scandal to my lord's service?"

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"Oh, content you, good Master Anthony Foster," answered Varney; "he that flies at all manner of game must keep all kinds of hawks, both short and long-winged. The course my lord holds is no easy one, and he must stand provided at all points with trusty retainers to meet each sort of service. He must have his gay courtier, like myself, to ruffle it in the presence-chamber, and to lay hand on hilt when any speaks in disparagement of my lord's honour—"

"Ay," said Foster, "and to whisper a word for him into a fair lady's ear, when he may not approach her himself."

"Then," said Varney, going on without appearing to notice the interruption, "he must have his lawyers—deep subtle pioneers—to draw his contracts, his pre-contracts, and his post-contracts, and to find the way to make the most of grants of church-lands and commons, and licenses for monopoly—And he must have physicians who can spice a cup or a caudle—And he must have his cabalists, like Dee and Allan, for conjuring up the devil—And he must have ruffling swordsmen, who would fight the devil when he is raised and at the wildest—And above all, without prejudice to others, he must have such godly, innocent, puritanic souls as thou, honest Anthony, who defy Satan, and do his work at the same time."

"You would not say, Master Varney," said Foster, "that our good lord and master, whom I hold to be fulfilled in all nobleness, would use such base and sinful means to rise, as thy speech points at?"

"Tush, man," said Varney, "never look at me with so sad a brow—you trap me not—nor am I in your power, as your weak brain may imagine, because I name to you freely the engines, the springs, the screws, the tackle, and

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braces, by which great men rise in stirring times.—Sayest thou our good lord is fulfilled of all nobleness?—Amen, and so be it—he has the more need to have those about him who are unscrupulous in his service, and who, because they know that his fall will overwhelm and crush them, must wager both blood and brain, soul and body, in order to keep him aloft; and this I tell thee, because I care not who knows it."

"You speak truth, Master Varney," said Anthony Foster; "he that is head of a party, is but a boat on a wave, that raises not itself, but is moved upward by the billow which it floats upon."

"Thou art metaphorical, honest Anthony," replied Varney; "that velvet doublet hath made an oracle of thee—we will have thee to Oxford to take the degrees in the arts.—And, in the meantime, hast thou arranged all the matters which were sent from London, and put the western chambers into such fashion as may answer my lord's humour?"

"They may serve a king on his bridal day," said Anthony; "and I promise you that Dame Amy sits in them yonder, as proud and gay as if she were the Queen of Sheba."

"'Tis the better, good Anthony," answered Varney; "we must found our future fortunes on her good liking."

"We build on sand then," said Anthony Foster; "for supposing that she sails away to court in all her lord's dignity and authority, how is she to look back upon me, who am her jailer as it were, to detain her here against her will, keeping her a caterpillar on an old wall, when she would fain be a painted butterfly in a court garden?"

"Fear not her displeasure, man," said Varney. "I will shew her that all thou hast done in this matter was

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good service, both to my lord and her; and when she chips the egg-shell and walks alone, she shall own we have hatched her greatness."

"Look to yourself, Master Varney," said Foster, "you may misreckon foully in this matter—She gave you but a frosty reception this morning, and, I think, looks on you, as well as me, with an evil eye."

"You mistake her, Foster—you mistake her utterly—To me she is bound by all the ties which can secure her to one who has been the means of gratifying both her love and ambition. Who was it that took the obscure Amy Robsart, the daughter of an impoverished and dotard knight—the destined bride of a moon-struck, moping enthusiast like Edmund Tressilian, from her lowly fates, and held out to her in prospect, the brightest fortune in England, or perchance in Europe? Why, man, it was I, as I have often told thee, that found opportunity for their secret meeting—It was I who watched the wood while he beat for the deer—It was I who, to this day, am blamed by her family as the companion of her flight, and were I in their neighbourhood, would be fain to wear a shirt of better stuff than Holland linen, lest my ribs should be acquainted with Spanish steel. Who carried their letters?—I. Who amused the old knight and Tressilian?—I. Who planned her escape?—it was I. It was I, in short, Dick Varney, who pulled this pretty little daisy from its lowly nook, and placed it in the proudest bonnet in Britain."

"Ay, Master Varney," said Foster, "but it may be she thinks, that had the matter remained with you, the flower had been stuck so slightly into the cap, that the first breath of a changeable breeze of passion had blown the poor daisy to the common."

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"She should consider," said Varney, smiling, "the true faith I owed my lord and master prevented me at first from counselling marriage—and yet I did counsel marriage when I saw she would not be satisfied without the—the sacrament, or the ceremony—which callest thou it, Anthony?"

"Still she has you at feud on another score," said Foster; "and I tell it you that you may look to yourself in time—She would not hide her splendour in this dark lantern of an old monastic house, but would fain shine a countess amongst countesses."

"Very natural, very right," answered Varney; "but what have I to do with that?—she may shine through horn or through crystal at my lord's pleasure, I have nought to say against it."

"She deems that you have an oar upon that side of the boat, Master Varney," replied Foster, "and that you can pull it or no, at your good pleasure. In a word, she ascribes the secrecy and obscurity in which she is kept, to your secret counsel to my lord, and to my strict agency; and so she loves us both as a sentenced man loves his judge and his jailer."

"She must love us better ere she leave this place, Anthony," answered Varney. "If I have counselled for weighty reasons that she remain here for a season, I can also advise her being brought forth in the full blow of her dignity. But I were mad to do so, holding so near a place to my lord's person, were she mine enemy. Bear this truth in upon her as occasion offers, Anthony, and let me alone for extolling you in her ear, and exalting you in her opinion—*Ka me, ka thee*—it is a proverb all over the world—The lady must know her friends, and be made to judge of the power they have of being her ene-

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mies—meanwhile, watch her strictly, but with all the outward observance that thy rough nature will permit. 'Tis an excellent thing that sullen look and bull-dog humour of thine; thou shouldst thank God for it, and so should my lord; for when there is aught harsh or hard-natured to be done, thou dost it as if it flowed from thine own natural doggedness, and not from orders, and so my lord escapes the scandal.—But, hark—some one knocks at the gate.—Look out of the window—let no one enter—this were an ill night to be interrupted."

"It is he whom we spoke of before dinner," said Foster, as he looked through the casement; "it is Michael Lambourne."

"Oh, admit him, by all means," said the courtier, "he comes to give some account of his guest—it imports us much to know the movements of Edmund Tressilian—Admit him, I say, but bring him not hither—I will come to you presently in the Abbot's Library."

Foster left the room, and the courtier, who remained behind, paced the parlour more than once in deep thought, his arms folded on his bosom, until at length he gave vent to his meditations in broken words, which we have somewhat enlarged and connected, that his soliloquy may be intelligible to the reader.

"'Tis true," he said, suddenly stopping, and resting his right hand on the table at which they had been sitting, "this base churl hath fathomed the very depth of my fear, and I have been unable to disguise it from him.—She loves me not—I would it were as true that I loved not her!—Idiot that I was, to move her in my own behalf, when wisdom bade me be a true broker to my lord!—And this fatal error has placed me more at her discretion than a wise man would willingly be at that of

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the best piece of painted Eve's flesh of them all. Since the hour that my policy made so perilous a slip, I cannot look at her without fear, and hate, and fondness, so strangely mingled, that I know not whether, were it at my choice, I would rather possess or ruin her. But she must not leave this retreat until I am assured on what terms we are to stand. My lord's interest—and so far it is mine own—for if he sinks, I fall in his train—demands concealment of this obscure marriage—and besides I will not lend her my arm to climb to her chair of state, that she may set her foot on my neck when she is fairly seated. I must work an interest in her, either through love or through fear—and who knows but I may yet reap the sweetest and best revenge for her former scorn?—that were indeed a masterpiece of court-like art!—Let me but once be her counsel-keeper—let her confide to me a secret, did it but concern the robbery of a linnet's nest, and, fair Countess, thou art mine own!" He again paced the room in silence, stopped, filled and drank a cup of wine, as if to compose the agitation of his mind; and muttering, "Now for a close heart, and an open and unruffled brow," he left the apartment.

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CHAPTER VI.

The dews of summer night did fall,
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silver'd the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby. *
MICKLE.

FOUR apartments, which occupied the western side of the old quadrangle at Cumnor-Place, had been fitted up with extraordinary splendour. This had been the work of several days prior to that on which our story opened. Workmen sent from London, and not permitted to leave the premises until the work was finished, had converted the apartments in that side of the building, from the dilapidated appearance of a dissolved monastic house, into the semblance of a royal palace. A mystery was observed in all these arrangements; the workmen came thither and returned by night, and all measures were taken to prevent the prying curiosity of the villagers from observing or speculating upon the changes which were taking place in the mansion of their once indigent, but now wealthy neighbour, Anthony Foster. Accordingly, the secrecy desired was so far preserved, that nothing got abroad but vague and uncertain reports, which were received and repeated, but without much credit being attached to them.

* This verse is the commencement of the ballad already quoted, as what suggested the novel.

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On the evening of which we treat, the new and highly decorated suite of rooms were, for the first time, illuminated, and that with a brilliancy which might have been visible half-a-dozen miles off, had not oaken shutters, carefully secured with bolt and padlock, and mantled with long curtains of silk and of velvet, deeply fringed with gold, prevented the slightest gleam of radiance from being seen without.

The principal apartments, as we have seen, were four in number, each opening into the other. Access was given to them by a large scale staircase, as they were then called, of unusual length and height, which had its landing-place at the door of an antechamber, shaped somewhat like a gallery. This apartment the Abbot had used as an occasional council-room, but it was now beautifully wainscoted with dark foreign wood of a brown colour, and bearing a high polish, said to have been brought from the Western Indies, and to have been wrought in London with infinite difficulty, and much damage to the tools of the workmen. The dark colour of this finishing was relieved by the number of lights in silver sconces, which hung against the walls, and by six large and richly-framed pictures, by the first masters of the age. A massy oaken table, placed at the lower end of the apartment, served to accommodate such as chose to play at the then fashionable game of shovel-board; and there was at the other end, an elevated gallery for the musicians or minstrels, who might be summoned to increase the festivity of the evening.

From this antechamber opened a banqueting-room of moderate size, but brilliant enough to dazzle the eyes of the spectator with the richness of its furniture. The walls, lately so bare and ghastly, were now clothed with

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hangings of sky-blue velvet and silver; the chairs were of ebony, richly carved, with cushions corresponding to the hangings; and the place of the silver sconces which enlightened the antechamber, was supplied by a huge chandelier of the same precious metal. The floor was covered with a Spanish foot-cloth, or carpet, on which flowers and fruits were represented in such glowing and natural colours, that you hesitated to place the foot on such exquisite workmanship. The table, of old English oak, stood ready covered with the finest linen, and a large portable court-cupboard was placed within the leaves of its embossed folding-doors displayed, shewing the shelves within, decorated with a full display of plate and porcelain. In the midst of the table stood a salt-cellar of Italian workmanship—a beautiful and splendid piece of plate about two feet high, moulded into a representation of the giant Briareus, whose hundred hands of silver presented to the guest various sorts of spices, or condiments, to season their food withal.

The third apartment was called the withdrawing-room. It was hung with the finest tapestry, representing the fall of Phaeton; for the looms of Flanders were now much occupied on classical subjects. The principal seat of this apartment was a chair of state, raised a step or two from the floor, and large enough to contain two persons. It was surmounted by a canopy, which, as well as the cushions, side-curtains, and the very foot-cloth, was composed of crimson velvet, embroidered with seed-pearl. On the top of the canopy were two coronets, resembling those of an earl and countess. Stools covered with velvet, and some cushions disposed in the Moorish fashion, and ornamented with Arabesque needlework, supplied the place of chairs in this apartment, which contained

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musical instruments, embroidery frames, and other articles for ladies' pastime. Besides lesser lights, the withdrawing-room was illuminated by four tall torches of virgin wax, each of which was placed in the grasp of a statue, representing an armed Moor, who held in his left arm a round buckler of silver, highly polished, interposed betwixt his breast and the light which was thus brilliantly reflected as from a crystal mirror.

The sleeping chamber belonging to this splendid suite of apartments, was decorated in a taste less showy, but not less rich, than had been displayed in the others. Two silver lamps, fed with perfumed oil, diffused at once a delicious odour and a trembling twilight-seeming shimmer through the quiet apartment. It was carpeted so thick, that the heaviest step could not have been heard; and the bed, richly heaped with down, was spread with an ample coverlet of silk and gold; from under which peeped forth cambric sheets, and blankets as white as the lambs which yielded the fleece that made them. The curtains were of blue velvet, lined with crimson silk, deeply festooned with gold and embroidered with the loves of Cupid and Psyche. On the toilet was a beautiful Venetian mirror, in a frame of silver filigree, and beside it stood a gold posset-dish to contain the night-draught. A pair of pistols and a dagger, mounted with gold, were displayed near the head of the bed, being the arms for the night, which were presented to honoured guests, rather, it may be supposed, in the way of ceremony, than from any apprehension of danger. We must not omit to mention, what was more to the credit of the manners of the time, that in a small recess, illuminated by a taper, were disposed two cassocks of velvet and gold, corresponding with the bed furniture, before a desk

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of carved ebony. This recess had formerly been the private oratory of the Abbot, but the crucifix was removed, and instead, there were placed on the desk two Books of Common Prayer, richly bound and embossed with silver. With this enviable sleeping apartment, which was so far removed from every sound, save that of the wind sighing among the oaks of the park, that Morpheus might have coveted it for his own proper repose, corresponded two wardrobes, or dressing-rooms as they are now termed, suitably furnished, and in a style of the same magnificence which we have already described. It ought to be added, that a part of the building in the adjoining wing was occupied by the kitchen and its offices, and served to accommodate the personal attendants of the great and wealthy nobleman, for whose use these magnificent preparations had been made.

The divinity for whose sake this temple had been decorated, was well worthy the cost and pains which had been bestowed. She was seated in the withdrawing-room which we have described, surveying with the pleased eye of natural and innocent vanity, the splendour which had been so suddenly created, as it were in her honour. For, as her own residence at Cumnor-Place formed the cause of the mystery observed in all the preparations for opening these apartments, it was sedulously arranged, that, until she took possession of them, she should have no means of knowing what was going forward in that part of the ancient building, or of exposing herself to be seen by the workmen engaged in the decorations. She had been, therefore, introduced on that evening to a part of the mansion which she had never yet seen, so different from all the rest, that it appeared, in comparison, like an enchanted palace. And when she first examined and

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occupied these splendid rooms, it was with the wild and unrestrained joy of a rustic beauty, who finds herself suddenly invested with a splendour which her most extravagant wishes had never imagined, and at the same time with the keen feeling of an affectionate heart, which knows that all the enchantment that surrounds her is the work of the great magician Love.

The Countess Amy, therefore,—for to that rank she was exalted by her private but solemn union with England's proudest Earl,—had for a time flitted hastily from room to room, admiring each new proof of her lover and her bridegroom's taste, and feeling that admiration enhanced, as she recollected that all she gazed upon was one continued proof of his ardent and devoted affection.—"How beautiful are these hangings!—How natural these paintings, which seem to contend with life!—How richly wrought is that plate, which looks as if all the galleons of Spain had been intercepted on the broad seas to furnish it forth!—And oh, Janet!" she exclaimed repeatedly to the daughter of Anthony Foster, the close attendant, who, with equal curiosity, but somewhat less ecstatic joy, followed on her mistress's footsteps—"Oh, Janet! how much more delightful to think, that all these fair things have been assembled by his love, for the love of me! and that this evening—this very evening, which grows darker every instant, I shall thank him more for the love that has created such an unimaginable paradise, than for all the wonders it contains!"

"The Lord is to be thanked first," said the pretty puritan, "who gave thee, lady, the kind and courteous husband, whose love has done so much for thee. I, too, have done my poor share. But if you thus run wildly from room to room, the toil of my crisping and my curl

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ing pins will vanish like the frostwork on the window when the sun is high."

"Thou sayest true, Janet," said the young and beautiful Countess, stopping suddenly from her tripping race of enraptured delight, and looking at herself from head to foot in a large mirror, such as she had never before seen, and which, indeed, had few to match it even in the Queen's palace—"Thou sayest true, Janet!" she answered, as she saw, with pardonable self-applause, the noble mirror reflect such charms as were seldom presented to its fair and polished surface; "I have more of the milk-maid than the countess, with these cheeks flushed with haste, and all these brown curls, which you laboured to bring to order, straying as wild as the tendrils of an unpruned vine—My falling ruff is chafed too, and shews the neck and bosom more than is modest and seemly—Come, Janet—we will practise state—we will go to the withdrawing-room, my good girl, and thou shalt put these rebel locks in order, and imprison within lace and cambric the bosom that beats too high."

They went to the withdrawing apartment accordingly, where the Countess playfully stretched herself upon the pile of Moorish cushions, half sitting, half reclining, half rapt in her own thoughts, half listening to the prattle of her attendant.

While she was in this attitude, and with a corresponding expression betwixt listlessness and expectation on her fine and expressive features, you might have searched sea and land without finding any thing half so expressive, or half so lovely. The wreath of brilliants which mixed with her dark brown hair, did not match in lustre the hazel eye which a light brown eyebrow, pencilled with exquisite delicacy, and long eyelashes of the same colour

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relieved and shaded. The exercise she had just taken, her excited expectation and gratified vanity, spread a glow over her fine features, which had been sometimes censured (as beauty as well as art has her minute critics) for being rather too pale. The milk-white pearls of the necklace which she wore, the same which she had just received as a true-love token from her husband, were excelled in purity by her teeth, and by the colour of her skin, saving where the blush of pleasure and self-satisfaction had somewhat stained the neck with a shade of light crimson.—"Now, have done with these busy fingers, Janet," she said to her handmaiden, who was still officiously employed in bringing her hair and her dress into order—"Have done, I say—I must see your father ere my lord arrives, and also Master Richard Varney, whom my lord has highly in his esteem—but I could tell that of him would lose him favour."

"Oh do not do so, good my lady!" replied Janet; "leave him to God, who punishes the wicked in his own time; but do not you cross Varney's path, for so thoroughly hath he my lord's ear, that few have thriven who have thwarted his courses."

"And from whom had you this, my most righteous Janet?" said the Countess; "or why should I keep terms with so mean a gentleman as Varney, being, as I am, wife to his master and patron?"

"Nay, madam," replied Janet Foster, "your ladyship knows better than I—But I have heard my father say, he would rather cross a hungry wolf, than thwart Richard Varney in his projects—And he has often charged me to have a care of holding commerce with him."

"Thy father said well, girl, for thee," replied the lady, "and I dare swear meant well. It is a pity, though, his

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face and manner do little match his true purpose—for I think his purpose may be true."

"Doubt it not, my lady," answered Janet,—"Doubt not that my father purposes well, though he is a plain man, and his blunt looks may belie his heart."

"I will not doubt it, girl, were it only for thy sake; and yet he has one of those faces which men tremble when they look on—I think even thy mother, Janet—nay, have done with that poking-iron—could hardly look upon him without quaking."

"If it were so, madam," answered Janet Foster, "my mother had those who could keep her in honourable countenance. Why, even you, my lady, both trembled and blushed when Varney brought the letter from my lord."

"You are bold, damsel," said the Countess, rising from the cushions on which she sate half-reclined in the arms of her attendant—"Know, that there are causes of trembling which have nothing to do with fear.—But, Janet," she added, immediately relapsing into the good-natured and familiar tone which was natural to her, "believe me I will do what credit I can to your father, and the rather that you, sweetheart, are his child.—Alas! alas!" she added, a sudden sadness passing over her fine features, and her eyes filling with tears, "I ought the rather to hold sympathy with thy kind heart, that my own poor father is uncertain of my fate, and they say lies sick and sorrowful for my worthless sake!—But I will soon cheer him—the news of my happiness and advancement will make him young again.—And that I may cheer him the sooner"—she wiped her eyes as she spoke—"I must be cheerful myself—My lord must not find me insensible to his kindness, or sorrowful when he snatches a visit to his

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recluse, after so long an absence. Be merry, Janet—the night wears on, and my lord must soon arrive.—Call thy father hither, and call Varney also—I cherish resentment against neither; and though I may have some room to be displeased with both, it shall be their own fault if ever a complaint against them reaches the Earl through my means.—Call them hither, Janet."

Janet Foster obeyed her mistress; and in a few minutes after, Varney entered the withdrawing room with the graceful ease and unclouded front of an accomplished courtier, skilled, under the veil of external politeness, to disguise his own feelings, and to penetrate those of others. Anthony Foster plodded into the apartment after him, his natural gloomy vulgarity of aspect seeming to become yet more remarkable, from his clumsy attempt to conceal the mixture of anxiety and dislike with which he looked on her, over whom he had hitherto exercised so severe a control, now so splendidly attired, and decked with so many pledges of the interest which she possessed in her husband's affections. The blundering reverence which he made, rather *at* than *to* the Countess, had confession in it—It was like the reverence which the criminal makes to the judge, when he at once owns his guilt and implores mercy,—which is at the same time an impudent and embarrassed attempt at defence or extenuation, a confession of a fault, and an entreaty for lenity.

Varney, who, in right of his gentle blood, had pressed into the room before Anthony Foster, knew better what to say than he, and said it with more assurance and a better grace.

The Countess greeted him indeed with an appearance of cordiality, which seemed a complete amnesty for whatever she might have to complain of. She rose from her

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seat, and advanced two steps towards him, holding forth her hand as she said, "Master Richard Varney, you brought me this morning such welcome tidings, that I fear surprise and joy made me neglect my lord and husband's charge to receive you with distinction. We offer you our hand, sir, in reconciliation."

"I am unworthy to touch it," said Varney, dropping on one knee, "save as a subject honours that of a prince."

He touched with his lips those fair and slender fingers so richly loaded with rings and jewels; then rising with graceful gallantry, was about to hand her to the chair of state, when she said, "No, good Master Richard Varney, I take not my place there until my lord himself conducts me. I am for the present but a disguised Countess, and will not take dignity on me until authorized by him whom I derive it from."

"I trust, my lady," said Foster, "that in doing the commands of my lord your husband, in your restraint and so forth, I have not incurred your displeasure, seeing that I did but my duty towards your lord and mine; for Heaven, as Holy Writ saith, hath given the husband supremacy and dominion over the wife—I think it runs so, or something like it."

"I receive at this moment so pleasant a surprise, Master Foster," answered the Countess, "that I cannot but excuse the rigid fidelity which secluded me from these apartments, until they had assumed an appearance so new and so splendid."

"Ay, lady," said Foster, "it hath cost many a fair crown; and that more need not be wasted than is absolutely necessary, I leave you till my lord's arrival with good Master Richard Varney, who, as I think, hath somewhat to say to you, from your most noble lord

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and husband.—Janet, follow me, to see that all be in order."

"No, Master Foster," said the Countess, "we will your daughter remains here in our apartment: out of ear-shot, however, in case Varney hath aught to say to me from my lord."

Foster made his clumsy reverence, and departed, with an aspect that seemed to grudge the profuse expense, which had been wasted upon changing his house from a bare and ruinous grange to an Asiatic palace. When he was gone, his daughter took her embroidery frame, and went to establish herself at the bottom of the apartment, while Richard Varney, with a profoundly humble courtesy, took the lowest stool he could find, and placing it by the side of the pile of cushions on which the Countess had now again seated herself, sat with his eyes for a time fixed on the ground, and in profound silence.

"I thought, Master Varney," said the Countess, when she saw he was not likely to open the conversation, "that you had something to communicate from my lord and husband; so at least I understood Master Foster, and therefore I removed my waiting-maid. If I am mistaken, I will recall her to my side; for her needle is not so absolutely perfect in tent and cross-stitch, but that my superintendence is advisable."

"Lady," said Varney, "Foster was partly mistaken in my purpose. It was not *from*, but *of* your noble husband, and my approved and most noble patron, that I am led, and indeed bound, to speak."

"The theme is most welcome, sir," said the Countess, "whether it be of or from my noble husband. But be brief, for I expect his hasty approach."

"Briefly, then, madam," replied Varney, "and boldly

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for my argument requires both haste and courage—You have this day seen Tressilian?"

"I have, sir, and what of that?" answered the lady somewhat sharply.

"Nothing that concerns me, lady," Varney replied, with humility. But think you, honoured madam, that your lord will hear it with equal equanimity?"

"And wherefore should he not?—to me alone was Tressilian's visit embarrassing and painful, for he brought news of my good father's illness."

"Of your father's illness, madam!" answered Varney. "It must have been sudden then—very sudden; for the messenger whom I dispatched, at my lord's instance, found the good knight on the hunting field, cheering his beagles with his wonted jovial field-cry. I trust Tressilian has but forged this news—He hath his reasons, madam, as you well know, for disquieting your present happiness."

"You do him injustice, Master Varney," replied the Countess, with animation,—"You do him much injustice. He is the freest, the most open, most gentle heart that breathes—My honourable lord ever excepted, I know not one to whom falsehood is more odious than to Tressilian."

"I crave your pardon, madam," said Varney, "I meant the gentleman no injustice—I knew not how nearly his cause affected you. A man may, in some circumstances, disguise the truth for fair and honest purpose; for were it to be always spoken, and upon all occasions, this were no world to live in."

"You have a courtly conscience, Master Varney," said the Countess, "and your veracity will not, I think, interrupt your preferment in the world, such as it is.—But touching Tressilian—I must do him justice, for I have done him wrong, as none knows better than thou.—Tres-

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silian's conscience is of other mould—the world thou speakest of has not that which could bribe him from the way of truth and honour; and for living in it with a soiled fame, the ermine would as soon seek to lodge in the den of the foul polecat. For this my father loved him—For this I would have loved him—if I could—And yet in this case he had what seemed to him, unknowing alike of my marriage, and to whom I was united, such powerful reasons to withdraw me from this place, that I well trust he exaggerated much of my father's indisposition, and that thy better news may be the truer."

"Believe me they are, madam," answered Varney; "I pretend not to be a champion of that same naked virtue called truth, to the very outrance. I can consent that her charms be hidden with a veil, were it but for decency's sake. But you must think lower of my head and heart, than is due to one whom my noble lord deigns to call his friend, if you suppose I could wilfully and unnecessarily palm upon your ladyship a falsehood, so soon to be detected, in a matter which concerns your happiness."

"Master Varney," said the Countess, "I know that my lord esteems you, and holds you a faithful and a good pilot in those seas in which he has spread so high and so venturous a sail. Do not suppose, therefore, I meant hardly by you, when I spoke the truth in Tressilian's vindication—I am, as you well know, country-bred, and like plain rustic truth better than courtly compliment; but I must change my fashions with my sphere, I presume."

"True, madam," said Varney, smiling, "and though you speak now in jest, it will not be amiss that in earnest your present speech had some connexion with your real purpose.—A court-dame—take the most noble—the most

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virtuous—the most unimpeachable, that stands around our Queen's throne—would, for example, have shunned to speak the truth, or what she thought such, in praise of a discarded suitor, before the dependent and confidant of her noble husband."

"And wherefore," said the Countess, colouring impatiently, "should I not do justice to Tressilian's worth, before my husband's friend—before my husband himself—before the whole world?"

"And with the same openness," said Varney, "your ladyship will this night tell my noble lord your husband, that Tressilian has discovered your place of residence, so anxiously concealed from the world, and that he has had an interview with you."

"Unquestionably," said the Countess. "It will be the first thing I tell him, together with every word that Tressilian said, and that I answered. I shall speak my own shame in this, for Tressilian's reproaches, less just than he esteemed them, were not altogether unmerited—I will speak, therefore, with pain, but I will speak and speak all."

"Your ladyship will do your pleasure," answered Varney; "but methinks it were as well, since nothing calls for so frank a disclosure, to spare yourself this pain, and my noble lord the disquiet, and Master Tressilian, since belike he must be thought of in the matter, the danger which is like to ensue."

"I can see nought of all these terrible consequences," said the lady, composedly, "unless by imputing to my noble lord unworthy thoughts which I am sure never harboured in his generous heart."

"Far be it from me to do so," said Varney.—And then after a moment's silence, he added, with a real or affected

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plainness of manner, very different from his usual smooth courtesy—"Come, madam, I will shew you that a courtier dare speak truth as well as another, when it concerns the weal of those whom he honours and regards, ay, and although it may infer his own danger."—He waited as if to receive commands, or at least permission, to go on, but as the lady remained silent, he proceeded, but obviously with caution.—"Look, around you," he said, "noble lady, and observe the barriers with which this place is surrounded, the studious mystery with which the brightest jewel that England possesses is secluded from the admiring gaze—See with what rigour your walks are circumscribed, and your movements restrained, at the beck of yonder churlish Foster. Consider all this, and judge for yourself what can be the cause."

"My lord's pleasure," answered the Countess; "and I am bound to seek no other motive."

"His pleasure it is indeed," said Varney, "and his pleasure arises out of a love worthy of the object which inspires it. But he who possesses a treasure, and who values it, is oft anxious, in proportion to the value he puts upon it, to secure it from the depredations of others."

"What needs all this talk, Master Varney?" said the lady, in reply; "you would have me believe that my noble lord is jealous—Suppose it true, I know a cure for jealousy."

"Indeed, madam!" said Varney.

"It is," replied the lady, "to speak the truth to my lord at all times; to hold up my mind and my thoughts before him as pure as that polished mirror; so that when he looks into my heart, he shall only see his own features reflected there."

"I am mute, madam," answered Varney; "and as I

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have no reason to grieve for Tressilian, who would have my heart's blood were he able, I shall reconcile myself easily to what may befall the gentleman, in consequence of your frank disclosure of his having presumed to intrude upon your solitude.—You, who know my lord so much better than I, will judge if he be likely to bear the insult unavenged."

"Nay, if I could think myself the cause of Tressilian's ruin," said the Countess,—"I who have already occasioned him so much distress, I might be brought to be silent.—And yet what will it avail, since he was seen by Foster, and I think by some one else?—No, no, Varney, urge it no more. I will tell the whole matter to my lord; and with such pleading for Tressilian's folly, as shall dispose my lord's generous heart rather to serve than to punish him."

"Your judgment, madam," said Varney, "is far superior to mine, especially as you may, if you will, prove the ice before you step on it, by mentioning Tressilian's name to my lord, and observing how he endures it. For Foster and his attendant, they know not Tressilian by sight, and I can easily give them some reasonable excuse for the appearance of an unknown stranger."

The lady paused for an instant, and then replied, "If, Varney, it be indeed true that Foster knows not as yet that the man he saw was Tressilian, I own I were unwilling he should learn what nowise concerns him. He bears himself already with austerity enough, and I wish him not to be judge or privy-councillor in my affairs."

"Tush," said Varney; "what has the surly groom to do with your ladyship's concerns?—No more, surely, than the ban-dog which watches his court-yard. If he is in aught distasteful to your ladyship, I have interest enough

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to have him exchanged for a seneschal that shall be more agreeable to you."

"Master Varney," said the Countess, "let us drop this theme—when I complain of the attendants whom my lord has placed around me, it must be to my lord himself. —Hark! I hear the trampling of horse—He comes! he comes!" she exclaimed jumping up in ecstasy.

"I cannot think it is he," said Varney; "or that you can hear the tread of his horse through the closely mantled casements."

"Stop me not, Varney—my ears are keener than thine —it is he!"

"But, madam!—but, madam!" exclaimed Varney, anxiously, and still placing himself in her way—"I trust that what I have spoken in humble duty and service, will not be turned to my ruin?—I hope that my faithful advice will not be bewrayed to my prejudice?—I implore that——"

"Content thee, man—content thee!" said the Countess, "and quit my skirt—you are too bold to detain me —Content thyself, I think not of thee."

At this moment the folding-doors flew wide open, and a man of majestic mien, muffled in the folds of a long dark riding-cloak, entered the apartment.

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CHAPTER VII.

——This is he
Who rides on the court-gale; controls its tides;
Knows all their secret shoals and fatal eddies;
Whose frown abases, and whose smile exalts,
He shines like any rainbow—and, perchance,
His colours are as transient.

OLD PLAY.

THERE was some little displeasure and confusion on the Countess's brow, owing to her struggle with Varney's pertinacity; but it was exchanged for an expression of the purest joy and affection, as she threw herself into the arms of the noble stranger who entered, and clasping him to her bosom, exclaimed, "At length—at length thou art come!".

Varney discreetly withdrew as his lord entered, and Janet was about to do the same, when her mistress signed to her to remain. She took her place at the farther end of the apartment, and continued standing, as if ready for attendance.

Meanwhile the earl, for he was of no inferior rank, returned his lady's caress with the most affectionate ardour, but affected to resist when she strove to take his cloak from him.

"Nay," she said, "but I will unmantle you—I must see if you have kept your word to me, and come as the great Earl men call thee, and not as heretofore like a private cavalier."

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"Thou art like the rest of the world, Amy," said the Earl, suffering her to prevail in the playful contest; "the jewels, and feathers, and silk, are more to them than the man whom they adorn—many a poor blade looks gay in a velvet scabbard."

"But so cannot men say of thee, thou noble Earl," said his lady, as the cloak dropped on the floor, and showed him dressed as princes when they ride abroad; "thou art the good and well-tried steel, whose inly worth deserves, yet disdains, its outward ornaments. Do not think Amy can love thee better in this glorious garb than she did when she gave her heart to him who wore the russet-brown cloak in the woods of Devon."

"And thou too," said the Earl, as gracefully and majestically he led his beautiful Countess towards the chair of state which was prepared for them both,—"thou too, my love, hast donned a dress which becomes thy rank, though it cannot improve thy beauty. What think'st thou of our court taste?"

The lady cast a sidelong glance upon the great mirror as they passed it by, and then said, "I know not how it is, but I think not of my own person, while I look at the reflection of thine. Sit thou there," she said, as they approached the chair of state, "like a thing for men to worship and to wonder at."

"Ay, love," said the Earl, "if thou wilt share my state with me."

"Not so," said the Countess; "I will sit on this footstool at thy feet, that I may spell over thy splendour, and learn, for the first time, how princes are attired."

And with a childish wonder, which her youth and rustic education rendered not only excusable but becoming, mixed as it was with a delicate show of the most tender

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conjugal affection, she examined and admired from head to foot the noble form and princely attire of him, who formed the proudest ornament of the court of England's Maiden Queen, renowned as it was for splendid courtiers, as well as for wise counsellors. Regarding affectionately his lovely bride, and gratified by her unrepressed admiration, the dark eye and noble features of the Earl expressed passions more gentle than the commanding and aspiring look which usually sate upon his broad forehead, and in the piercing brilliancy of his dark eye; and he smiled at the simplicity which dictated the questions she put to him concerning the various ornaments with which he was decorated.

"The embroidered strap, as thou callest it, around my knee," he said, "is the English Garter, an ornament which kings are proud to wear. See, here is the star which belongs to it, and here the Diamond George, the jewel of the Order. You have heard how King Edward and the Countess of Salisbury——"

"Oh, I know all that tale," said the Countess, slightly blushing, "and how a lady's garter became the proudest badge of English chivalry."

"Even so," said the Earl, "and this most honourable Order I had the good hap to receive at the same time with three most noble associates, the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Northampton, and the Earl of Rutland. I was the lowest of the four in rank—but what then?—he that climbs a ladder must begin at the first round."

"But this other fair collar, so richly wrought, with some jewel like a sheep hung by the middle attached to it, what," said the young Countess, "does that emblem signify?"

"This collar," said the Earl, "with its double fusilles

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interchanged with these knobs, which are supposed to present flint-stones, sparkling with fire, and sustaining the jewel you inquire about, is the badge of the noble Order of the Golden Fleece, once appertaining to the House of Burgundy. It hath high privileges, my Amy, belonging to it, this most noble Order; for even the King of Spain himself, who hath now succeeded to the honours and demesnes of Burgundy, may not sit in judgment upon a knight of the Golden Fleece, unless by assistance and consent of the Great Chapter of the Order."

"And is this an order belonging to the cruel King of Spain?" said the Countess. "Alas! my noble lord, that you will defile your noble English breast by bearing such an emblem! Bethink you of the most unhappy Queen Mary's days, when this same Philip held sway with her in England, and of the piles which were built for our noblest, and our wisest, and our most truly sanctified prelates and divines—And will you, whom men call the standard-bearer of the true Protestant faith, be contented to wear the emblem and mark of such a Romish tyrant as he of Spain?"

"Oh, content you, my love," answered the Earl; "we who spread our sails to gales of court favor, cannot always display the ensigns we love the best, or at all times refuse sailing under colours which we like not. Believe me, I am not the less good Protestant, that for policy I must accept the honour offered me by Spain, in admitting me to this his highest order of knighthood. Besides, it belongs properly to Flanders; and Egmont, Orange, and others, have pride in seeing it displayed on an English bosom."

"Nay, my lord, you know your own path best," replied the Countess.—"And this other collar, to what country does this fair jewel belong?"

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"To a very poor one, my love," replied the Earl "this is the Order of Saint Andrew, revived by the last James of Scotland. It was bestowed on me when it was thought the young widow of France and Scotland would gladly have wedded an English baron; but a free coronet of England is worth a crown matrimonial held at the humour of a woman, and owning only the poor rocks and bogs of the north."

The Countess paused, as if what the Earl last said had excited some painful but interesting train of thought; and, as she still remained silent, her husband proceeded.

"And now, loveliest, your wish is gratified, and you have seen your vassal in such of his trim array as accords with riding vestments; for robes of state and coronets are only for princely halls."

"Well, then," said the Countess, "my gratified wish has, as usual, given rise to a new one."

"And what is it thou canst ask that I can deny?" said the fond husband.

"I wished to see my Earl visit this obscure and secret bower," said the Countess, "in all his princely array; and now, methinks, I long to sit in one of his princely halls, and see him enter dressed in sober russet, as when he won poor Amy Robsart's heart."

"That is a wish easily granted," said the Earl—"the sober russet shall be donned to-morrow, if you will."

"But shall I," said the lady, "go with you to one of your castles, to see how the richness of your dwelling will correspond with your peasant habit?"

"Why, Amy," said the Earl, looking around, "are not these apartments decorated with sufficient splendour? I gave the most unbounded order, and, methinks it has been indifferently well obeyed—but if thou canst tell

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me aught which remains to be done, I will instantly give direction."

"Nay, my lord, now you mock me," replied the Countess; "the gaiety of this rich lodging exceeds my imagination as much as it does my desert. But shall not your wife, my love—at least one day soon—be surrounded with the honour, which arises neither from the toils of the mechanic who decks her apartment, nor from the silks and jewels with which your generosity adorns her, but which is attached to her place among the matronage, as the avowed wife of England's noblest Earl?"

"One day?" said her husband,—"Yes, Amy, my love, one day this shall surely happen; and, believe me, thou canst not wish for that day more fondly than I. With what rapture could I retire from labours of state, and cares and toils of ambition, to spend my life in dignity and honour on my own broad domains, with thee, my lovely Amy, for my friend and companion! But, Amy, this cannot yet be; and these dear but stolen interviews, are all I can give to the loveliest and the best beloved of her sex."

"But *why* can it not be?" urged the Countess, in the softest tones of persuasion,—"Why can it not immediately take place—this more perfect, this uninterrupted union, for which you say you wish, and which the laws of God and man alike command?—Ah! did you but desire it half as much as you say, mighty and favoured as you are, who, or what, should bar your attaining your wish?"

The Earl's brow was overcast.

"Amy," he said, "you speak of what you understand not. We that toil in courts are like those who climb a mountain of loose sand—we dare make no halt until some projecting rock affords us a secure footing and

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resting-place—if we pause sooner, we slide down by our own weight, an object of universal derision. I stand high, but I stand not secure enough to follow my own inclination. To declare my marriage were to be the artificer of my own ruin. But, believe me, I will reach a point, and that speedily, when I can do justice to thee and to myself. Meantime, poison not the bliss of the present moment by desiring that which cannot at present be. Let me rather know whether all here is managed to thy liking. How does Foster bear himself to you?—in all things respectful, I trust, else the fellow shall dearly rue it."

"He reminds me sometimes of the necessity of this privacy," answered the lady, with a sigh; "but that is reminding me of your wishes, and therefore, I am rather bound to him than disposed to blame him for it."

"I have told you the stern necessity which is upon us," replied the Earl. "Foster is, I note, somewhat sullen of mood, but Varney warrants to me his fidelity and devotion to my service. If thou hast aught, however, to complain of the mode in which he discharges his duty, he shall abye it."

"Oh, I have nought to complain of," answered the lady, "so he discharges his task with fidelity to you; and his daughter Janet is the kindest and best companion of my solitude—her little air of precision sits so well upon her!"

"Is she indeed?" said the Earl; "she who gives you pleasure, must not pass unrewarded.—Come hither, damsel."

"Janet," said the lady, "come hither to my lord."

Janet, who, as we already noticed, had discreetly retired to some distance, that her presence might be no

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check upon the private conversation of her lord and lady, now came forward, and as she made her reverential courtesy, the Earl could not help smiling at the contrast which the extreme simplicity of her dress, and the prim demureness of her looks made with a very pretty countenance and a pair of black eyes, that laughed in spite of their mistress's desire to look grave.

"I am bound to you, pretty damsel," said the Earl, "for the contentment which your service hath given to this lady." As he said this, he took from his finger a ring of some price, and offered it to Janet Foster, adding, "Wear this for her sake and for mine."

"I am well pleased, my lord," answered Janet, demurely, "that my poor service hath gratified my lady, whom no one can draw nigh to without desiring to please; but we of the precious Master Holdforth's congregation, seek not, like the gay daughters of this world, to twine gold around our fingers, or wear stones upon our necks, like the vain women of Tyre and of Sidon."

"Oh, what! you are a grave professor of the precise sisterhood, pretty Mistress Janet," said the Earl, "and I think your father is of the same congregation in sincerity. I like you both the better for it; for I have been prayed for, and wished well to, in your congregations. And you may the better afford the lack of ornament, Mistress Janet, because your fingers are slender, and your neck white. But here is what neither papist nor puritan, latitudinarian, nor precisian, ever boggles or makes mouths at. E'en take it, my girl, and employ it as you list."

So saying, he put into her hand five broad gold pieces of Philip and Mary.

"I would not accept this gold neither," said Janet,

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"but that I hope to find a use for it, which will bring a blessing on us all."

"Even please thyself, pretty Janet," said the Earl, "and I shall be well satisfied—And I prithee let them hasten the evening collation."

"I have bidden Master Varney and Master Foster to sup with us, my lord," said the Countess, as Janet retired to obey the Earl's commands; "has it your approbation?"

"What you do ever must have so, my sweet Amy," replied her husband; "and I am the better pleased thou hast done them this grace, because Richard Varney is my sworn man, and a close brother of my secret council; and for the present I must needs repose much trust in this Anthony Foster."

"I had a boon to beg of thee, and a secret to tell thee, my dear lord," said the Countess, with a faltering accent.

"Let both be for to-morrow, my love," replied the Earl. "I see they open the folding-doors into the banqueting-parlour, and as I have ridden far and fast, a cup of wine will not be unacceptable."

So saying, he led his lovely wife into the next apartment, where Varney and Foster received them with the deepest reverences, which the first paid with the fashion of the court, and the second after that of the congregation. The Earl returned their salutation with the negligent courtesy of one long used to such homage; while the Countess repaid it with a punctilious solicitude, which shewed it was not quite so familiar to her.

The banquet at which the company seated themselves, corresponded in magnificence with the splendour of the apartment in which it was served up, but no domestic gave his attendance. Janet alone stood ready to wait

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upon the company; and, indeed, the board was so well supplied with all that could be desired, that little or no assistance was necessary. The Earl and his lady occupied the upper end of the table, and Varney and Foster sat beneath the salt, as was the custom with inferiors. The latter, overawed perhaps by society to which he was altogether unused, did not utter a single syllable during the repast; while Varney, with great tact and discernment, sustained just as much of the conversation, as, without the appearance of intrusion on his part, prevented it from languishing, and maintained the good-humour of the Earl at the highest pitch. This man was indeed highly qualified by nature to discharge the part in which he found himself placed, being discreet and cautious on the one hand, and on the other, quick, keen-witted, and imaginative; so that even the Countess, prejudiced as she was against him on many accounts, felt and enjoyed his powers of conversation, and was more disposed than she had ever hitherto found herself, to join in the praises which the Earl lavished on his favourite. The hour of rest at length arrived; the Earl and Countess retired to their apartment; and all was silent in the castle for the rest of the night.

Early on the ensuing morning, Varney acted as the Earl's chamberlain, as well as his master of horse, though the latter was his proper office in that magnificent household, where knights and gentlemen of good descent were well contented to hold such menial situations, as nobles themselves held in that of the sovereign. The duties of each of these charges were familiar to Varney, who, sprung from an ancient but decayed family, was the Earl's page during his earlier and more obscure fortunes, and faithful to him in adversity, had afterwards contrived to

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render himself no less useful to him in his rapid and splendid advance to fortune; thus establishing in him an interest, resting both on present and past services, which rendered him an almost indispensable sharer of his confidence.

"Help me to do on a plainer riding suit, Varney," said the Earl, as he laid aside his morning-gown, flowered with silk, and lined with sables, "and put these chains and fetters there" (pointing to the collars of the various Orders which lay on the table) "into their place of security—my neck last night was well-nigh broke with the weight of them. I am half of the mind that they shall gall me no more. They are bonds which knaves have invented to fetter fools. How think'st thou, Varney?"

"Faith, my good lord," said his attendant, "I think fetters of gold are like no other fetters—they are ever the weightier the welcomer."

"For all that, Varney," replied his master, "I am well-nigh resolved they shall bind me to the court no longer. What can farther service and higher favour give me, beyond the high rank and large estate which I have already secured?—What brought my father to the block, but that he could not bound his wishes within right and reason?—I have, you know, had mine own ventures and mine own escapes: I am well-nigh resolved to tempt the sea no farther, but sit me down in quiet on the shore."

"And gather cockle-shells, with Dan Cupid to aid you," said Varney.

"How mean you by that, Varney?" said the Earl, somewhat hastily.

"Nay, my lord," said Varney, "be not angry with me.

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If your lordship is happy in a lady so rarely lovely, that in order to enjoy her company with somewhat more freedom, you are willing to part with all you have hitherto lived for, some of your poor servants may be sufferers; but your bounty hath placed me so high, that I shall ever have enough to maintain a poor gentleman in the rank befitting the high office he has held in your lordship's family."

"Yet you seem discontented when I propose throwing up a dangerous game, which may end in the ruin of both of us."

"I, my lord?" said Varney; "surely I have no cause to regret your lordship's retreat!—It will not be Richard Varney who will incur the displeasure of majesty, and the ridicule of the court, when the stateliest fabric that ever was founded upon a prince's favour melts away like a morning frost-work.—I would only have you yourself to be assured, my lord, ere you take a step which cannot be retracted, that you consult your fame and happiness in the course you propose."

"Speak on then, Varney," said the Earl; "I tell thee I have determined nothing, and will weigh all considerations on either side."

"Well, then, my lord," replied Varney, "we will suppose the step taken, the frown frowned, the laugh laughed, and the moan moaned. You have retired, we will say, to some one of your most distant castles, so far from court that you hear neither the sorrow of your friends, nor the glee of your enemies. We will suppose, too, that your successful rival will be satisfied (a thing greatly to be doubted) with abridging and cutting away the branches of the great tree which so long kept the sun from him, and that he does not insist upon tearing you up by the

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roots. Well; the late prime favourite of England, who wielded her general's staff and controlled her parliaments, is now a rural baron, hunting, hawking, drinking fat ale with country esquires, and mustering his men at the command of the High Sheriff——"

"Varney, forbear!" said the Earl.

"Nay, my lord, you must give me leave to conclude my picture.—Sussex governs England—the Queen's health fails—the succession is to be settled—a road is opened to ambition more splendid than ambition ever dreamed of.—You hear all this as you sit by the hob, under the shade of your hall-chimney—You then begin to think what hopes you have fallen from, and what insignificance you have embraced—and all that you might look babies in the eyes of your fair wife oftener than once a-fortnight."

"I say, Varney," said the Earl, "no more of this. I said not that the step, which my own ease and comfort would urge me to, was to be taken hastily, or without due consideration to the public safety. Bear witness to me, Varney; I subdue my wishes of retirement, not because I am moved by the call of private ambition, but that I may preserve the position in which I may best serve my country at the hour of need.—Order our horses presently —I will wear, as formerly, one of the livery cloaks, and ride before the portmantle.—Thou shalt be master for the day, Varney—neglect nothing that can blind suspicion. We will to horse ere men are stirring. I will but take leave of my lady, and be ready. I impose a restraint on my own poor heart, and wound one yet more dear to me; but the patriot must subdue the husband."

Having said this in a melancholy but firm accent, he left the dressing apartment.

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"I am glad thou art gone," thought Varney, "or, practised as I am in the follies of mankind, I had laughed in the very face of thee! Thou mayest tire as thou wilt of thy new bauble, thy pretty piece of painted Eve's flesh there, I will not be thy hindrance. But of thine old bauble, ambition, thou shalt not tire, for as you climb the hill, my lord, you must drag Richard Varney up with you; and if he can urge you to the ascent he means to profit by, believe me he will spare neither whip nor spur. —And for you, my pretty lady, that would be Countess outright, you were best not thwart my courses, lest you are called to an old reckoning on a new score. 'Thou shalt be master,' did he say!—By my faith, he may find that he spoke truer than he is aware of—And thus he, who, in the estimation of so many wise-judging men, can match Burleigh and Walsingham in policy, and Sussex in war, becomes pupil to his own menial; and all for a hazel eye and a little cunning red and white—and so falls ambition. And yet if the charms of mortal woman could excuse a man's politic pate for becoming bewildered, my lord had the excuse at his right hand on this blessed evening that has last passed over us. Well—let things roll as they may, he shall make me great, or I will make myself happy; and for that softer piece of creation, if she speak not out her interview with Tressilian, as well I think she dare not, she also must traffic with me for concealment and mutual support in spite of all this scorn.—I must to the stables.—Well, my lord, I order your retinue now; the time may soon come that *my* master of the horse shall order mine own. What was Thomas Cromwell but a smith's son, and he died my lord—on a scaffold, doubtless, but that, too, was in character—And what was Ralph Sadler but the clerk of Cromwell, and

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he has gazed eighteen fair lordships,—*viâ!* I know my steerage as well as they."

So saying, he left the apartment.

In the meanwhile the Earl had re-entered the bed-chamber, bent on taking a hasty farewell of the lovely Countess, and scarce daring to trust himself in private with her, to hear requests again urged, which he found it difficult to parry, yet which his recent conversation with his master of horse had determined him not to grant.

He found her in a white cymar of silk lined with furs, her little feet unstockinged and hastily thrust into slippers; her unbraided hair escaping from under her midnight coif, with little array but her own loveliness, rather augmented than diminished by the grief which she felt at the approaching moment of separation.

"Now, God be with thee, my dearest and loveliest!" said the Earl, scarce tearing himself from her embrace, yet again returning to fold her again and again in his arms, and again bidding farewell, and again returning to kiss and bid adieu once more.

"The sun is on the verge of the blue horizon—I dare not stay. Ere this I should have been ten miles from hence."

Such were the words, with which at length he strove to cut short their parting interview.

"You will not grant my request, then?" said the Countess. "Ah, false knight! did ever lady, with bare foot in slipper, seek boon of a brave Knight, yet return with denial?"

"Any thing, Amy, any thing thou canst ask I will grant," answered the Earl—"always excepting," he said, "that which might ruin us both."

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"Nay," said the Countess, "I urge not my wish to be acknowledged in the character which would make me the envy of England—as the wife, that is, of my brave and noble lord, the first as the most fondly beloved of English nobles.—Let me but share the secret with my dear father!—Let me but end his misery on my unworthy account—they say he is ill, the good old kind-hearted man."

"*They* say?" asked the Earl, hastily; "who says? Did not Varney convey to Sir Hugh all we dare at present tell him concerning your happiness and welfare? and has he not told you that the good old knight was following, with good heart and health, his favourite and wonted exercise? Who has dared put other thoughts into your head?"

"Oh, no one, my lord, no one," said the Countess, something alarmed at the tone in which the question was put; "but yet, my lord, I would fain be assured by mine own eye-sight that my father is well."

"Be contented, Amy—thou canst not now have communication with thy father or his house. Were it not a deep course of policy to commit no secret unnecessarily to the custody of more than must needs be, it were sufficient reason for secrecy, that yonder Cornish man, yonder Trevanion, or Tressilian, or whatever his name is, haunts the old knight's house, and must necessarily know whatever is communicated there."

"My lord," answered the Countess, "I do not think it so. My father has been long noted a worthy and honourable man; and for Tressilian, if we can pardon ourselves the ill we have wrought him, I will wager the coronet I am to share with you one day, that he is incapable of returning injury for injury."

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"I will not trust him, however, Amy," said her husband; "by my honour, I will not trust him—I would rather the foul fiend intermingle in our secret than this Tressilian!"

"And why, my lord?" said the Countess, though she shuddered slightly at the tone of determination in which he spoke; "let me but know why you think thus hardly of Tressilian?"

"Madam," replied the Earl, "my will ought to be a sufficient reason.—If you desire more, consider how this Tressilian is leagued, and with whom—He stands high in the opinion of this Radcliffe, this Sussex, against whom I am barely able to maintain my ground in the opinion of our suspicious mistress; and if he had me at such advantage, Amy, as to become acquainted with the tale of our marriage, before Elizabeth were fitly prepared, I were an outcast from her grace for ever—a bankrupt at once in favour and in fortune, perhaps, for she hath in her a touch of her father Henry,—a victim, and it may be a bloody one, to her offended and jealous resentment."

"But why, my lord," again urged his lady, "should you deem thus injuriously of a man, of whom you know so little? What you do know of Tressilian is through me, and it is I who assure you that in no circumstances will he betray your secret. If I did him wrong in your behalf, my lord, I am now the more concerned you should do him justice.—You are offended at my speaking of him, what would you say had I actually myself seen him?"

"If you had," replied the Earl, "you would do well to keep that interview as secret as that which is spoken in a confessional. I seek no one's ruin; but he who thrusts himself on my secret privacy, were better look well to

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his future walk. The bear * brooks no one to cross his awful path."

"Awful, indeed!" said the Countess, turning very pale.

"You are ill, my love," said the Earl, supporting her in his arms; "stretch yourself on your couch again; it is but an early day for you to leave it.—Have you aught else, involving less than my fame, my fortune, and my life, to ask of me?"

"Nothing, my lord and love," answered the Countess, faintly; "something there was that I would have told you, but your anger has driven it from my recollection."

"Reserve it till our next meeting, my love," said the Earl, fondly, and again embracing her; "and barring only those requests which I cannot and dare not grant, thy wish must be more than England and all its dependencies can fulfil, if it is not gratified to the letter."

Thus saying, he at length took farewell. At the bottom of the staircase he received from Varney an ample livery cloak and slouched hat, in which he wrapped himself so as to disguise his person, and completely conceal his features. Horses were ready in the court-yard for himself and Varney;—for one or two of his train, intrusted with the secret so far as to know or guess that the Earl intrigued with a beautiful lady at that mansion, though her name and quality were unknown to them, had already been dismissed over night.

Anthony Foster himself had in hand the rein of the Earl's palfrey, a stout and able nag for the road; while his old serving-man held the bridle of the more showy and gallant steed which Richard Varney was to occupy in the character of master.

* The Leicester cognizance was the ancient device adopted by his father, when Earl of Warwick, the bear and ragged staff.

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As the Earl approached, however, Varney advanced to hold his master's bridle, and to prevent Foster from paying that duty to the Earl, which he probably considered as belonging to his own office. Foster scowled at an interference which seemed intended to prevent his paying his court to his patron, but gave place to Varney; and the Earl, mounting without farther observation, and forgetting that his assumed character of a domestic threw him into the rear of his supposed master, rode pensively out of the quadrangle, not without waving his hand repeatedly in answer to the signals which were made by the Countess with her kerchief, from the windows of her apartment.

While his stately form vanished under the dark archway which led out of the quadrangle, Varney muttered, "There goes fine policy—the servant before the master!" then as he disappeared, seized the moment to speak a word with Foster. "Thou look'st dark on me, Anthony," he said, "as if I had deprived thee of a parting nod of my lord; but I have moved him to leave thee a better remembrance for thy faithful service. See here! a purse of as good gold as ever chinked under a miser's thumb and forefinger. Ay, count them, lad," said he, as Foster received the gold with a grim smile, "and add to them the goodly remembrance he gave last night to Janet."

"How's this! how's this!" said Anthony Foster, hastily; "gave he gold to Janet?"

"Ay, man, wherefore not?—does not her service to his fair lady require guerdon?"

"She shall have none on't," said Foster; "she shall return it. I know his dotage on one face is as brief as it is deep. His affections are as fickle as the moon."

"Why, Foster, thou art mad—thou dost not hope for

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such good fortune as that my lord should cast an eye on Janet?—Who, in the fiend's name, would listen to the thrush when the nightingale is singing?"

"Thrush or nightingale, all is one to the fowler; and, Master Varney, you can sound the quailpipe most daintily to wile wantons into his nets. I desire no such devil's preferment for Janet as you have brought many a poor maiden to—Dost thou laugh?—I will keep one limb of my family, at least, from Satan's clutches, that thou mayest rely on—She shall restore the gold."

"Ay, or give it to thy keeping, Tony, which will serve as well," answered Varney; "but I have that to say which is more serious.—Our lord is returning to court in an evil humour for us."

"How meanest thou?" said Foster. "Is he tired already of his pretty toy—his plaything yonder? He has purchased her at a monarch's ransom, and I warrant me he rues his bargain."

"Not a whit, Tony," answered the master of the horse; "he dotes on her, and will forsake the court for her—then down goes hopes, possessions, and safety—church-lands are resumed, Tony, and well if the holders be not called to account in Exchequer."

"That were ruin," said Foster, his brow darkening with apprehensions; "and all this for a woman!—Had it been for his soul's sake, it were something; and I sometimes wish I myself could fling away the world that cleaves to me, and be as one of the poorest of our church."

"Thou art like enough to be so, Tony," answered Varney; "but I think the devil will give thee little credit for thy compelled poverty, and so thou losest on all hands. But follow my counsel, and Cumnor-Place shall be thy copyhold yet—Say nothing of this Tresilian's visit—not a word until I give thee notice."

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"And wherefore, I pray you?" asked Foster, suspiciously.

"Dull beast!" replied Varney; "in my lord's present humour it were the ready way to confirm him in his resolution of retirement, should he know that his lady was haunted with such a spectre in his absence. He would be for playing the dragon himself over his golden fruit, and then, Tony, thy occupation is ended. A word to the wise—Farewell—I must follow him."

He turned his horse, struck him with the spurs, and rode off under the archway in pursuit of his lord.

"Would thy occupation were ended, or thy neck broken, damned pander!" said Anthony Foster. "But I must follow his beck, for his interest and mine are the same, and he can wind the proud Earl to his will. Janet shall give me these pieces, though—they shall be laid out in some way for God's service, and I will keep them separate in my strong chest, till I can fall upon a fitting employment for them. No contagious vapour shall breathe on Janet—she shall remain pure as a blessed spirit, were it but to pray God for her father. I need her prayers, for I am at a hard pass—Strange reports are abroad concerning my way of life. The congregation look cold on me, and when Master Holdforth spoke of hypocrites being like a whited sepulchre, which within was full of dead men's bones, methought he looked full at me. The Romish was a comfortable faith; Lambourne spoke true in that. A man had but to follow his thrift by such ways as offered—tell his beads—hear a mass—confess, and be absolved. These puritans tread a harder and a rougher path; but I will try—I will read my Bible for an hour ere I again open mine iron chest."

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Varney, meantime, spurred after his lord, whom he found waiting for him at the postern-gate of the park.

"You waste time, Varney," said the Earl; "and it presses. I must be at Woodstock before I can safely lay aside my disguise; and till then, I journey in some peril."

"It is but two hours' brisk riding, my lord," said Varney; "for me I only stopped to enforce your commands of care and secrecy on yonder Foster, and to inquire about the abode of the gentleman whom I would promote to your lordship's train, in the room of Trevors."

"Is he fit for the meridian of the antechamber, think'st thou?" said the Earl.

"He promises well, my lord," replied Varney; "but if your lordship were pleased to ride on, I could go back to Cumnor, and bring him to your lordship at Woodstock before you are out of bed."

"Why, I am asleep there, thou knowest, at this moment," said the Earl; "and I pray you not to spare horse-flesh, that you may be with me at my levee."

So saying, he gave his horse the spur, and proceeded on his journey, while Varney rode back to Cumnor by the public road, avoiding the park. The latter alighted at the door of the Bonny Black Bear, and desired to speak with Master Michael Lambourne. That respectable character was not long of appearing before his new patron, but it was with downcast looks.

"Thou hast lost the scent," said Varney, "of thy comrade Tressilian.—I know it by thy hang-dog visage. Is this thy alacrity, thou impudent knave?"

"Cogswounds!" said Lambourne, "there was never a trail so finely hunted. I saw him to earth at mine uncle's here—stuck to him like bees' wax—saw him at supper—

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watched him to his chamber, and presto—he is gone next morning, the very hostler knows not where!"

"This sounds like practice upon me, sir," replied Varney; "and if it prove so, by my soul you shall repent it!"

"Sir, the best hound will be sometimes at fault," answered Lambourne; "how should it serve me that this fellow should have thus evanished? You may ask mine host, Giles Gosling—ask the tapster and hostler—ask Cicely, and the whole household, how I kept eyes on Tressilian while he was on foot.—On my soul, I could not be expected to watch him like a sick-nurse, when I had seen him fairly a-bed in his chamber. That will be allowed me surely."

Varney did, in fact, make some inquiry among the household, which confirmed the truth of Lambourne's statement. Tressilian, it was unanimously agreed, had departed suddenly and unexpectedly, betwixt night and morning.

"But I will wrong no one," said mine host; "he left on the table in his lodging the full value of his reckoning, with some allowance to the servants of the house, which was the less necessary, that he saddled his own gelding, as it seems, without the hostler's assistance."

Thus satisfied of the rectitude of Lambourne's conduct, Varney began to talk to him upon his future prospects, and the mode in which he meant to bestow himself, intimating that he understood from Foster, he was not disinclined to enter into the household of a nobleman.

"Have you," said he, "ever been at court?"

"No," replied Lambourne; "but ever since I was ten years old, I have dreamt once a-week that I was there, and made my fortune."

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"It may be your own fault if your dream comes not true," said Varney. "Are you needy?"

"Um!" replied Lambourne; "I love pleasure."

"That is a sufficient answer, and an honest one," said Varney. "Know you aught of the requisites expected from the retainer of a rising courtier?"

"I have imagined them to myself, sir," answered Lambourne; "as for example, a quick eye—a close mouth—a ready and bold hand—a sharp wit, and a blunt conscience."

"And thine, I suppose," said Varney, "has had its edge blunted long since?"

"I cannot remember, sir, that its edge was ever over keen," replied Lambourne. "When I was a youth, I had some few whimsies, but I rubbed them partly out of my recollection on the rough grindstone of the wars, and what remained I washed out in the broad waves of the Atlantic."

"Thou hast served, then, in the Indies?"

"In both East and West," answered the candidate for court-service, "by both sea and land; I have served both the Portugal and the Spaniard—both the Dutchman and the Frenchman, and have made war on our own account with a crew of jolly fellows, who held there was no peace beyond the Line." *

"Thou mayest do me, and my lord, and thyself, good service," said Varney, after a pause. "But observe, I know the world—and answer me truly, canst thou be faithful?"

"Did you not know the world," answered Lambourne, "it were my duty to say ay, without farther circumstance,

* Sir Francis Drake, Morgan, and many a bold Buccanier of those days, were, in fact, little better than pirates.

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and to swear to it with life and honour, and so forth. But as it seems to me that your worship is one who desires rather honest truth than politic falsehood—I reply to you, that I can be faithful to the gallows foot; ay, to the loop that dangles from it, if I am well used and well recompensed;—not otherwise."

"To thy other virtues thou canst add, no doubt," said Varney, in a jeering tone, "the knack of seeming serious and religious, when the moment demands it?"

"It would cost me nothing," said Lambourne, "to say yes—but, to speak on the square, I must needs say no. If you want a hypocrite, you may take Anthony Foster, who, from his childhood, had some sort of phantom haunting him, which he called religion, though it was that sort of godliness which always ended in being great gain. But I have no such knack of it."

"Well," replied Varney, "if thou hast no hypocrisy, hast thou not a nag here in the stable?"

"Ay, sir," said Lambourne, "that shall take hedge and ditch with my Lord Duke's best hunters. When I made a little mistake on Shooter's Hill, and stopped an ancient grazier whose pouches were better lined than his brain-pan, the bonny bay nag carried me sheer off, in spite of the whole hue and cry."

"Saddle him then, instantly, and attend me," said Varney. "Leave thy clothes and baggage under charge of mine host, and I will conduct thee to a service, in which, if thou do not better thyself, the fault shall not be fortune's, but thine own."

"Brave and hearty!" said Lambourne, "and I am mounted in an instant.—Knave, hostler, saddle my nag without the loss of one instant, as thou dost value the safety of thy noddle.—Pretty Cicely, take half this purse to comfort thee for my sudden departure."

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"Gogsnouns!" replied the father, "Cicely wants no such token from thee—Go away, Mike, and gather grace if thou canst, though I think thou goest not to the land where it grows."

"Let me look at this Cicely of thine, mine host," said Varney; "I have heard much talk of her beauty."

"It is a sunburnt beauty," said mine host, "well qualified to stand out rain and wind, but little calculated to please such critical gallants as yourself. She keeps her chamber, and cannot encounter the glance of such sunny-day courtiers as my noble guest."

"Well, peace be with her, my good host," answered Varney; "our horses are impatient—we bid you good day."

"Does my nephew go with you, so please you?" said Gosling.

"Ay, such is his purpose," answered Richard Varney.

"You are right—fully right," replied mine host—"you are, I say, fully right, my kinsman. Thou hast got a gay horse, see thou light not unaware upon a halter—or, if thou wilt needs be made immortal by means of a rope, which thy purpose of following this gentleman renders not unlikely, I charge thee to find a gallows as far from Cumnor as thou conveniently mayest; and so I commend you to your saddle."

The master of the horse and his new retainer mounted accordingly, leaving the landlord to conclude his ill-omened farewell, to himself and at leisure; and set off together at a rapid pace, which prevented conversation until the ascent of a steep sandy hill permitted them to resume it.

"You are contented, then," said Varney to his companion, "to take court-service?"

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"Ay, worshipful sir, if you like my terms as well as I like yours."

"And what are your terms?" demanded Varney.

"If I am to have a quick eye for my patron's interest, he must have a dull one towards my faults," said Lambourne.

"Ay," said Varney, "so they lie not so grossly open that he must needs break his shins over them."

"Agreed," said Lambourne. "Next, if I run down game, I must have the picking of the bones."

"That is but reason," replied Varney, "so that your betters are served before you."

"Good," said Lambourne; "and it only remains to be said, that if the law and I quarrel, my patron must bear me out, for that is a chief point."

"Reason again," said Varney, "if the quarrel hath happened in your master's service."

"For the wage and so forth, I say nothing," proceeded Lambourne; "it is the secret guerdon that I must live by."

"Never fear," said Varney; "thou shalt have clothes and spending money to ruffle it with the best of thy degree; for thou goest to a household where you have gold, as they say, by the eye."

"That jumps all with my humour," replied Michael Lambourne; "and it only remains that you tell me my master's name."

"My name is Master Richard Varney," answered his companion.

"But I mean," said Lambourne, "the name of the noble lord to whose service you are to prefer me."

"How, knave, art thou too good to call *me* master?" said Varney, hastily; "I would have thee bold to others, but not saucy to me."

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"I crave your worship's pardon," said Lambourne "but you seemed familiar with Anthony Foster, now I am familiar with Anthony myself."

"Thou art a shrewd knave, I see," replied Varney. "Mark me—I do indeed propose to introduce thee into a nobleman's household; but it is upon my person thou wilt chiefly wait, and upon my countenance that thou wilt depend. I am his master of horse—Thou wilt soon know his name—it is one that shakes the council and wields the state."

"By this light, a brave spell to conjure with," said Lambourne, "if a man would discover hidden treasures!"

"Used with discretion, it may prove so," replied Varney; "but mark—if thou conjure with it at thine own hand, it may raise a devil who will tear thee in fragments."

"Enough said," replied Lambourne; "I will not exceed my limits."

The travellers then resumed the rapid rate of travelling which their discourse had interrupted, and soon arrived at the Royal Park of Woodstock. This ancient possession of the crown of England was then very different from what it had been when it was the residence of the fair Rosamond, and the scene of Henry the Second's secret and illicit amours; and yet more unlike to the scene which it exhibits in the present day, when Blenheim House commemorates the victory of Marlborough, and no less the genius of Vanburgh, though decried in his own time by persons of taste far inferior to his own. It was, in Elizabeth's time, an ancient mansion in bad repair, which had long ceased to be honoured with the royal residence, to the great impoverishment of the adjacent village. The inhabitants, however, had made several

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petitions to the Queen to have the favour of the sovereign's countenance occasionally bestowed upon them; and upon this very business, ostensibly at least, was the noble lord, whom we have already introduced to our readers, a visitor at Woodstock.

Varney and Lambourne galloped without ceremony into the court-yard of the ancient and dilapidated mansion, which presented on that morning a scene of bustle which it had not exhibited for two reigns. Officers of the Earl's household, liverymen and retainers, went and came with all the insolent fracas which attaches to their profession. The neigh of horses and the baying of hounds were heard; for my lord, in his occupation of inspecting and surveying the manor and demesne, was of course provided with the means of following his pleasure in the chase or park, said to have been the earliest that was enclosed in England, and which was well stocked with deer that had long roamed there unmolested. Several of the inhabitants of the village, in anxious hope of a favourable result from this unwonted visit, loitered about the court-yard, and awaited the great man's coming forth. Their attention was excited by the hasty arrival of Varney, and a murmur ran amongst them, "The Earl's master of the horse!" while they hurried to bespeak favour by hastily unbonneting, and proffering to hold the bridle and stirrup of the favoured retainer and his attendant.

"Stand somewhat aloof, my masters!" said Varney, haughtily, "and let the domestics do their office."

The mortified citizens and peasants fell back at the signal; while Lambourne, who had his eye upon his superior's deportment, repelled the services of those who offered to assist him, with yet more discourtesy—"Stand back, Jack peasant, with a murrain to you, and let these knave footmen do their duty!"

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While they gave their nags to the attendants of the household, and walked into the mansion with an air of superiority which long practice and consciousness of birth rendered natural to Varney, and which Lambourne endeavoured to imitate as well as he could, the poor inhabitants of Woodstock whispered to each other, "Well-a-day —God save us from all such misproud princoxes! An the master be like the men, why, the fiend may take all, and yet have no more than his due."

"Silence, good neighbours!" said the Bailiff, "keep tongue betwixt teeth—we shall know more by and by.—But never will a lord come to Woodstock so welcome as bluff old King Harry! He would horsewhip a fellow one day with his own royal hand, and then fling him an handful of silver groats, with his own broad face on them, to 'noint the sore withal."

"Ay, rest be with him!" echoed the auditors; "it will be long ere this Lady Elizabeth horsewhip any of us."

"There is no saying," answered the Bailiff. "Meanwhile, patience, good neighbours, and let us comfort ourselves by thinking that we deserve such notice at her Grace's hands."

Meanwhile, Varney, closely followed by his new dependent, made his way to the hall, where men of more note and consequence than those left in the court-yard awaited the appearance of the Earl, who as yet kept his chamber. All paid court to Varney, with more or less deference, as suited their own rank, or the urgency of the business which brought them to his lord's levee. To the general question of, "When comes my lord forth, Master Varney?" he gave brief answers, as, "See you not my boots? I am just returned from Oxford, and know nothing of it," and the like, until the same query was put in a

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higher tone by a personage of more importance. "I will inquire of the chamberlain, Sir Thomas Copely," was the reply. The chamberlain, distinguished by his silver key, answered, that the Earl only awaited Master Varney's return to come down, but that he would first speak with him in his private chamber. Varney, therefore, bowed to the company, and took leave, to enter his lord's apartment.

There was a murmur of expectation which lasted a few minutes, and was at length hushed by the opening of the folding-doors at the upper end of the apartment, through which the Earl made his entrance, marshalled by his chamberlain and the steward of his family, and followed by Richard Varney. In his noble mien, and princely features, men read nothing of that insolence which was practised by his dependents. His courtesies were, indeed, measured by the rank of those to whom they were addressed, but even the meanest person present had a share of his gracious notice. The inquiries which he made respecting the condition of the manor, of the Queen's rights there, and of the advantages and disadvantages which might attend her occasional residence at the royal seat of Woodstock, seemed to shew that he had most earnestly investigated the matter of the petition of the inhabitants, and with a desire to forward the interest of the place.

"Now, the Lord love his noble countenance," said the Bailiff, who had thrust himself into the presence-chamber; "he looks somewhat pale. I warrant him he hath spent the whole night in perusing our memorial. Master Toughyarn, who took six months to draw it up, said it would take a week to understand it; and see if the Earl hath not knocked the marrow out of it in twenty-four hours."

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The Earl then acquainted them that he should move their sovereign to honour Woodstock occasionally with her residence during her royal progresses, that the town and its vicinity might derive, from her countenance and favour, the same advantages as from those of her predecessors. Meanwhile he rejoiced to be the expounder of her gracious pleasure, in assuring them that, for the increase of trade, and encouragement of the worthy burgesses of Woodstock, her majesty was minded to erect the town into a Staple for wool.

This joyful intelligence was received with the acclamations not only of the better sort who were admitted to the audience-chamber, but of the commons who awaited without.

The freedom of the corporation was presented to the Earl upon knee by the magistrates of the place, together with a purse of gold pieces, which the Earl handed to Varney, who, on his part, gave a share to Lambourne, as the most acceptable earnest of his new service.

The Earl and his retinue took horse soon after, to return to court, accompanied by the shouts of the inhabitants of Woodstock, who made the old oaks ring with re-echoing, "Long live Queen Elizabeth, and the noble Earl of Leicester!" The urbanity and courtesy of the Earl even threw a gleam of popularity over his attendants, as their haughty deportment had formerly obscured that of their master; and men shouted, "Long life to the Earl, and to his gallant followers!" as Varney and Lambourne, each in his rank, rode proudly through the streets of Woodstock.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Host.—I will hear you, Master Fenton;
And I will, at least, keep your counsel.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

It becomes necessary to return to the detail of those circumstances which accompanied, and indeed occasioned, the sudden disappearance of Tressilian from the sign of the Black Bear at Cumnor. It will be recollected that this gentleman, after his rencounter with Varney, had returned to Giles Gosling's caravansary, where he shut himself up in his own chamber, demanded pen, ink, and paper, and announced his purpose to remain private for the day: in the evening he appeared again in the public room, where Michael Lambourne, who had been on the watch for him, agreeably to his engagement to Varney, endeavoured to renew his acquaintance with him, and hoped he retained no unfriendly recollection of the part he had taken in the morning's scuffle.

But Tressilian repelled his advances firmly, though with civility—"Master Lambourne," said he, "I trust I have recompensed to your pleasure the time you have wasted on me. Under the show of wild bluntness which you exhibit, I know you have sense enough to understand me, when I say frankly, that the object of our temporary acquaintance having been accomplished, we must be strangers to each other in future."

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"*Voto!*" said Lambourne, twirling his whiskers with one hand, and grasping the hilt of his weapon with the other; "if I thought that this usage was meant to insult me——"

"You would bear it with discretion, doubtless," interrupted Tressilian, "as you must do at any rate. You know too well the distance that is betwixt us, to require me to explain myself farther.—Good evening."

So saying, he turned his back upon his former companion, and entered into discourse with the landlord. Michael Lambourne felt strongly disposed to bully; but his wrath died away in a few incoherent oaths and ejaculations, and he sank unresistingly under the ascendency which superior spirits possess over persons of his habits and description. He remained moody and silent in a corner of the apartment, paying the most marked attention to every motion of his late companion, against whom he began now to nourish a quarrel on his own account, which he trusted to avenge by the execution of his new master Varney's directions. The hour of supper arrived, and was followed by that of repose, when Tressilian, like others, retired to his sleeping apartment.

He had not been in bed long, when the train of sad reveries, which supplied the place of rest in his disturbed mind, was suddenly interrupted by the jar of a door on its hinges, and a light was seen to glimmer in the apartment. Tressilian, who was as brave as steel, sprang from his bed at this alarm, and had laid hand upon his sword, when he was prevented from drawing it, by a voice which said, "Be not too rash with your rapier, Master Tressilian—It is I, your host, Giles Gosling."

At the same time, unshrouding the dark lantern, which had hitherto only emitted an indistinct glimmer, the

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goodly aspect and figure of the landlord of the Black Bear was visibly presented to his astonished guest.

"What mummery is this, mine host?" said Tressilian; "have you supped as jollily as last night, and so mistaken your chamber? or is midnight a time for masquerading it in your guest's lodging?"

"Master Tressilian," replied mine host, "I know my place and my time as well as e'er a merry landlord in England. But here has been my hang-dog kinsman watching you as close as ever cat watched a mouse; and here have you, on the other hand, quarrelled and fought either with him or with some other person, and I fear that danger will come of it."

"Go to, thou art but a fool, man," said Tressilian; "thy kinsman is beneath my resentment; and besides, why shouldst thou think I had quarrelled with any one whomsoever?"

"Oh! sir," replied the innkeeper, "there was a red spot on thy very cheek-bone, which boded of a late brawl, as sure as the conjunction of Mars and Saturn threatens misfortune—and when you returned, the buckles of your girdle were brought forward, and your step was quick and hasty, and all things shewed your hand and your hilt had been lately acquainted."

"Well, good mine host, if I have been obliged to draw my sword," said Tressilian, "why should such a circumstance fetch thee out of thy warm bed at this time of night? Thou seest the mischief is all over."

"Under favour, that is what I doubt. Anthony Foster is a dangerous man, defended by strong court patronage, which hath borne him out in matters of very deep concernment. And then, my kinsman—why, I have told you what he is; and if these two old cronies have made

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up their old acquaintance, I would not, my worshipful guest, that it should be at thy cost. I promise you, Mike Lambourne has been making very particular inquiries at mine hostler, when and which way you ride. Now, I would have you think, whether you may not have done or said something for which you may be waylaid, and taken at disadvantage."

"Thou art an honest man, mine host," said Tressilian, after a moment's consideration, "and I will deal frankly with thee. If these men's malice is directed against me—as I deny not but it may—it is because they are the agents of a more powerful villain than themselves."

"You mean Master Richard Varney, do you not?" said the landlord; "he was at Cumnor-Place yesterday, and came not thither so private but what he was espied by one who told me."

"I mean the same, mine host."

"Then, for God's sake, worshipful Master Tressilian," said honest Gosling, "look well to yourself. This Varney is the protector and patron of Anthony Foster, who holds under him, and by his favour, some lease of yonder mansion and the park. Varney got a large grant of the lands of the Abbacy of Abingdon, and Cumnor-Place amongst others, from his master, the Earl of Leicester. Men say he can do every thing with him, though I hold the Earl too good a nobleman to employ him as some men talk of. —And then the Earl can do any thing (that is, anything right or fitting) with the Queen, God bless her, so you see what an enemy you have made to yourself."

"Well—it is done, and I cannot help it," answered Tressilian.

"Uds precious, but it must be helped in some manner," said the host. "Richard Varney—why, what between

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his influence with my lord, and his pretending to so many old and vexatious claims in right of the Abbot here, men fear almost to mention his name, much more to set themselves against his practices. You may judge by our discourses the last night. Men said their pleasure of Tony Foster, but not a word of Richard Varney, though all men judge him to be at the bottom of yonder mystery about the pretty wench. But perhaps you know more of that matter than I do, for women, though they wear not swords, are occasion for many a blade's exchanging a sheath of neat's leather for one of flesh and blood."

"I do indeed know more of that poor unfortunate lady than thou dost, my friendly host; and so bankrupt am I, at this moment, of friends and advice, that I will willingly make a counsellor of thee, and tell thee the whole history, the rather that I have a favour to ask when my tale is ended."

"Good Master Tressilian," said the landlord, "I am but a poor innkeeper, little able to adjust or counsel such a guest as yourself. But as sure as I have risen decently above the world, by giving good measure and reasonable charges, I am an honest man; and as such, if I may not be able to assist you, I am at least not capable to abuse your confidence. Say away, therefore, as confidently as if you spoke to your father; and thus far at least be certain, that my curiosity—for I will not deny that which belongs to my calling—is joined to a reasonable degree of discretion."

"I doubt it not, mine host," answered Tressilian; and while his auditor remained in anxious expectation, he meditated for an instant how he should commence his narrative. "My tale," he at length said, "to be quite intelligible, must begin at some distance back.—You have

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heard of the battle of Stoke, my good host, and perhaps of old Sir Roger Robsart, who, in that battle, valiantly took part with Henry VII., the Queen's grandfather, and routed the Earl of Lincoln, Lord Geraldin and his wild Irish, and the Flemings whom the Duchess of Burgundy had sent over, in the quarrel of Lambert Simnel?"

"I remember both one and the other," said Giles Gosling, "it is sung of a dozen times a-week on my ale-bench below.—Sir Roger Robsart of Devon—Oh, ay,—'tis him of whom minstrels sing to this hour,—

'He was the flower of Stoke's red field,
When Martin Swart on ground lay slain;
In raging rout he never reel'd,
But like a rock did firm remain.' *

Ay, and then there was Martin Swart I have heard my grandfather talk of, and of the jolly Almains whom he commanded, with their slashed doublets and quaint hose, all frounced with ribbons above the nether stocks. Here's a song goes of Martin Swart, too, an I had but memory for it:—

'Martin Swart and his men,
Saddle them, saddle them,
Martin Swart and his men,
Saddle them well.'" †

"True, good mine host—the day was long talked of; but if you sing so loud, you will awake more listeners than I care to commit my confidence unto."

* This verse, or something similar, occurs in a long ballad, or poem, on Flodden-Field, reprinted by the late Henry Weber.

† This verse of an old song *actually* occurs in an old play, where the singer boasts—

Courteously I can both counter and knack
Of Martin Swart and all his merry-men.

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"I crave pardon, my worshipful guest," said mine host, "I was oblivious. When an old song comes across us merry old knights of the spigot, it runs away with our discretion."

"Well, mine host, my grandfather, like some other Cornish-men, kept a warm affection to the House of York, and espoused the quarrel of this Simnel, assuming the title of Earl of Warwick, as the county afterwards, in great numbers, countenanced the cause of Perkin Warbeck, calling himself the Duke of York. My grandsire joined Simnel's standard, and was taken fighting desperately at Stoke, where most of the leaders of that unhappy army were slain in their harness. The good knight to whom he rendered himself, Sir Roger Robsart, protected him from the immediate vengeance of the King, and dismissed him without ransom. But he was unable to guard him from other penalties of his rashness, being the heavy fines by which he was impoverished, according to Henry's mode of weakening his enemies. The good knight did what he might to mitigate the distresses of my ancestor; and their friendship became so strict, that my father was bred up as the sworn brother and intimate of the present Sir Hugh Robsart, the only son of Sir Roger, and the heir of his honest, and generous, and hospitable temper, though not equal to him in martial achievements."

"I have heard of good Sir Hugh Robsart," interrupted the host, "many a time and oft. His huntsman and sworn servant, Will Badger, hath spoken of him an hundred times in this very house—a jovial knight he is, and hath loved hospitality and open housekeeping more than the present fashion, which lays as much gold lace on the seams of a doublet as would feed a dozen of tall fellows with beef and ale for a twelvemonth, and let them have

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their evening at the ale-house once a-week, to do good to the publican."

"If you have seen Will Badger, mine host," said Tressilian, "you have heard enough of Sir Hugh Robsart; and therefore I will but say, that the hospitality you boast of hath proved somewhat detrimental to the estate of his family, which is perhaps of the less consequence, as he has but one daughter to whom to bequeath it. And here begins my share in the tale. Upon my father's death, now several years since, the good Sir Hugh would willingly have made me his constant companion. There was a time, however, at which I felt the kind knight's excessive love for field-sports detained me from studies, by which I might have profited more; but I ceased to regret the leisure which gratitude and hereditary friendship compelled me to bestow on these rural avocations. The exquisite beauty of Mistress Amy Robsart, as she grew up from childhood to woman, could not escape one whom circumstances obliged to be so constantly in her company—I loved her, in short, my host, and her father saw it."

"And crossed your true loves, no doubt?" said mine host; "it is the way in all such cases; and I judge it must have been so in your instance, from the heavy sigh you uttered even now."

"The case was different, mine host. My suit was highly approved by the generous Sir Hugh Robsart—it was his daughter who was cold to my passion."

"She was the more dangerous enemy of the two," said the innkeeper. "I fear your suit proved a cold one."

"She yielded me her esteem," said Tressilian, "and seemed not unwilling that I should hope it might ripen into a warmer passion. There was a contract of future

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marriage executed betwixt us, upon her father's intercession; but to comply with her anxious request, the execution was deferred for a twelvemonth. During this period, Richard Varney appeared in the country, and, availing himself of some distant family connexion with Sir Hugh Robsart, spent much of his time in his company, until, at length, he almost lived in the family."

"That could bode no good to the place he honoured with his residence," said Gosling.

"No, by the rood!" replied Tressilian. "Misunderstanding and misery followed his presence, yet so strangely, that I am at this moment at a loss to trace the gradations of their encroachment upon a family, which had, till then, been so happy. For a time Amy Robsart received the attentions of this man Varney with the indifference attached to common courtesies; then followed a period in which she seemed to regard him with dislike, and even with disgust; and then an extraordinary species of connexion appeared to grow up betwixt them. Varney dropped those airs of pretension and gallantry which had marked his former approaches; and Amy, on the other hand, seemed to renounce the ill-disguised disgust with which she had regarded them. They seemed to have more of privacy and confidence together, than I fully liked; and I suspected that they met in private, where there was less restraint than in our presence. Many circumstances, which I noticed but little at the time—for I deemed her heart as open as her angelic countenance—have since arisen on my memory, to convince me of their private understanding. But I need not detail them—the fact speaks for itself. She vanished from her father's house—Varney disappeared at the same time—and this very day I have seen her in the character of his paramour,

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living in the house of his sordid dependent Foster, and visited by him, muffled, and by a secret entrance."

"And this, then, is the cause of your quarrel? Methinks, you should have been sure that the fair lady either desired or deserved your interference."

"Mine host," answered Tressilian, "my father, such I must ever consider Sir Hugh Robsart, sits at home struggling with his grief, or, if so far recovered, vainly attempting to drown, in the practice of his field-sports, the recollection that he had once a daughter—a recollection which ever and anon breaks from him under circumstances the most pathetic. I could not brook the idea that he should live in misery, and Amy in guilt; and I endeavoured to seek her out, with the hope of inducing her to return to her family. I have found her, and when I have either succeeded in my attempt, or have found it altogether unavailing, it is my purpose to embark for the Virginia voyage."

"Be not so rash, good sir," replied Giles Gosling, "and cast not yourself away because a woman—to be brief—*is* a woman, and changes her lovers like her suit of ribands, with no better reason than mere fantasy. And ere we probe this matter farther, let me ask you what circumstances of suspicion directed you so truly to this lady's residence, or rather to her place of concealment?"

"The last is the better chosen word, mine host," answered Tressilian; "and touching your question, the knowledge that Varney held large grants of the demesnes formerly belonging to the Monks of Abingdon, directed me to this neighbourhood; and your nephew's visit to his old comrade Foster, gave me the means of conviction on the subject."

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"And what is now your purpose, worthy sir?—excuse my freedom in asking the question so broadly."

"I purpose, mine host," said Tressilian, "to renew my visit to the place of her residence to-morrow, and to seek a more detailed communication with her than I have had to-day. She must indeed be widely changed from what she once was, if my words make no impression upon her."

"Under your favour, Master Tressilian," said the landlord, "you can follow no such course. The lady, if I understand you, has already rejected your interference in the matter."

"It is but too true," said Tressilian; "I cannot deny it."

"Then marry, by what right or interest do you process a compulsory interference with her inclination, disgraceful as it may be to herself and to her parents? Unless my judgment gulls me, those under whose protection she has thrown herself, would have small hesitation to reject your interference, even if it were that of a father or brother; but as a discarded lover, you expose yourself to be repelled with the strong hand, as well as with scorn. You can apply to no magistrate for aid or countenance; and you are hunting, therefore, a shadow in water, and will only (excuse my plainness) come by ducking and danger in attempting to catch it."

"I will appeal to the Earl of Leicester," said Tressilian, "against the infamy of his favourite.—He courts the severe and strict sect of puritans—He dare not, for the sake of his own character, refuse my appeal, even although he were destitute of the principles of honour and nobleness, with which fame invests him. Or I will appeal to the Queen herself."

"Should Leicester," said the landlord, "be disposed to protect his dependent, (as indeed he is said to be very

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confidential with Varney,) the appeal to the Queen may bring them both to reason. Her Majesty is strict in such matters, and (if it be not treason to speak it) will rather, it is said, pardon a dozen courtiers for falling in love with herself, than one for giving preference to another woman. Coragio, then, my brave guest! for if thou layest a petition from Sir Hugh at the foot of the throne, bucklered by the story of thine own wrongs, the favourite earl dared as soon leap into the Thames at the fullest and deepest, as offer to protect Varney in a cause of this nature. But to do this with any chance of success, you must go formally to work; and, without staying here to tilt with the master of horse to a privy counsellor, and expose yourself to the dagger of his cameradoes, you should hie you to Devonshire, get a petition drawn up for Sir Hugh Robsart, and make as many friends as you can to forward your interest at court."

"You have spoken well, mine host," said Tressilian. "And I will profit by your advice, and leave you to-morrow early."

"Nay, leave me to-night, sir, before to-morrow comes," said the landlord. "I never prayed for a guest's arrival more eagerly than I do to have you safely gone. My kinsman's destiny is most like to be hanged for something, but I would not that the cause were the murder of an honoured guest of mine. 'Better ride safe in the dark,' says the proverb, 'than in daylight with a cut-throat at your elbow.' Come, sir, I move you for your own safety. Your horse and all is ready, and here is your score."

"It is somewhat under a noble," said Tressilian, giving one to the host; "give the balance to pretty Cicely, your daughter, and the servants of the house."

"They shall taste of your bounty, sir," said Gosling,

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"and you should taste of my daughter's lips in grateful acknowledgment, but at this hour she cannot grace the porch to greet your departure."

"Do not trust your daughter too far with your guests, my good landlord," said Tressilian.

"Oh, sir, we will keep measure; but I wonder not that you are jealous of them all.—May I crave to know with what aspect the fair lady at the Place yesterday received you?"

"I own," said Tressilian, "it was angry as well as confused, and affords me little hope that she is yet awakened from her unhappy delusion."

"In that case, sir, I see not why you should play the champion of a wench that will none of you, and incur the resentment of a favourite's favourite, as dangerous a monster as ever a knight adventurer encountered in the old story books."

"You do me wrong in the supposition, mine host—gross wrong," said Tressilian; "I do not desire that Amy should ever turn thought upon me more. Let me but see her restored to her father, and all I have to do in Europe —perhaps in the world—is over and ended."

"A wiser resolution were to drink a cup of sack, and forget her," said the landlord. "But five-and-twenty and fifty look on those matters with different eyes, especially when one case of peepers is set in the skull of a young gallant, and the other in that of an old publican. I pity you, Master Tressilian, but I see not how I can aid you in the matter."

"Only thus far, mine host," replied Tressilian—"Keep a watch on the motions of those at the Place, which thou canst easily learn without suspicion, as all men's news fly to the ale-bench; and be pleased to communicate the

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tidings in writing to such person, and to no other, who shall bring you this ring as a special token—look at it—it is of value, and I will freely bestow it on you."

"Nay, sir," said the landlord, "I desire no recompense—but it seems an unadvised course in me, being in a public line, to connect myself in a matter of this dark and perilous nature. I have no interest in it."

"You, and every father in the land, who would have his daughter released from the snares of shame, and sin, and misery, have an interest deeper than aught concerning earth only could create."

"Well, sir," said the host, "these are brave words; and I do pity from my soul the frank-hearted old gentleman, who has minished his estate in good house-keeping for the honour of his country, and now has his daughter, who should be the stay of his age, and so forth, whisked up by such a kite as this Varney. And though your part in the matter is somewhat of the wildest, yet I will e'en be a madcap for company, and help you in your honest attempt to get back the good man's child, so far as being your faithful intelligencer can serve. And as I shall be true to you, I pray you to be trusty to me, and keep my secret; for it were bad for the custom of the Black Bear, should it be said the bear-warder interfered in such matters. Varney has interest enough with the justices to dismount my noble emblem from the post on which he swings so gallantly, to call in my license, and ruin me from garret to cellar."

"Do not doubt my secrecy, mine host," said Tressilian; "I will retain, besides, the deepest sense of thy service, and of the risk thou dost run—remember the ring is my sure token.—And now, farewell—for it was thy wise advice that I should tarry here as short a time as may be."

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"Follow me, then, Sir Guest," said the landlord, "and tread as gently as if eggs were under your foot, instead of deal boards.—No one must know when or how you departed."

By the aid of his dark lantern he conducted Tressilian, as soon as he had made himself ready for his journey, through a long intricacy of passages, which opened to an outer court, and from thence to a remote stable, where he had already placed his guest's horse. He then aided him to fasten on the saddle the small portmantle which contained his necessaries, opened a postern-door, and with a hearty shake of the hand, and a reiteration of his promise to attend to what went on at Cumnor-Place, he dismissed his guest to his solitary journey.

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CHAPTER IX.

Far in the lane a lonely hut he found,
No tenant ventured on the unwholesome ground;
Here smokes his forge, he bares his sinewy arm,
And early strokes the sounding anvil warm;
Around his shop the steely sparkles flew,
As for the steed he shaped the bending shoe.

GAY'S TRIVIA.

As it was deemed proper by the traveller himself, as well as by Giles Gosling, that Tressilian should avoid being seen in the neighbourhood of Cumnor by those whom accident might make early risers, the landlord had given him a route, consisting of various byways and lanes, which he was to follow in succession, and which, all the turns and short-cuts duly observed, was to conduct him to the public road to Marlborough.

But, like counsel of every other kind, this species of direction is much more easily given than followed; and what betwixt the intricacy of the way, the darkness of the night, Tressilian's ignorance of the country, and the sad and perplexing thoughts with which he had to contend, his journey proceeded so slowly, that morning found him only in the vale of Whitehorse, memorable for the defeat of the Danes in former days, with his horse deprived of a fore-foot shoe, an accident which threatened to put a stop to his journey, by laming the animal. The residence of a smith was his first object of inquiry, in

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which he received little satisfaction from the dulness or sullenness of one or two peasants, early bound for their labour, who gave brief and indifferent answers to his questions on the subject. Anxious, at length, that the partner of his journey should suffer as little as possible from the unfortunate accident, Tressilian dismounted, and led his horse in the direction of a little hamlet, where he hoped either to find or hear tidings of such an artificer as he now wanted. Through a deep and muddy lane, he at length waded on to the place, which proved only an assemblage of five or six miserable huts, about the doors of which, one or two persons, whose appearance seemed as rude as that of their dwellings, were beginning the toils of the day. One cottage, however, seemed of rather superior aspect, and the old dame, who was sweeping her threshold, appeared something less rude than her neighbours. To her Tressilian addressed the oft-repeated question, whether there was a smith in this neighbourhood, or any place where he could refresh his horse? The dame looked him in the face with a peculiar expression, as she replied, "Smith! ay, truly is there a smith—what wouldst ha' wi' un, mon?"

"To shoe my horse, good dame," answered Tressilian; "you may see that he has thrown a fore-foot shoe."

"Master Holiday!" exclaimed the dame, without returning any direct answer—"Master Herasmus Holiday, come and speak to mon, and please you."

"*Favete linguis*," answered a voice from within; "I cannot now come forth, Gammer Sludge, being in the very sweetest bit of my morning studies."

"Nay, but, good now, Master Holiday, come ye out, do ye—Here's a mon would to Wayland Smith, and I care not to shew him way to devil—his horse hath cast shoe."

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"*Quid mihi cum caballo?*" replied the man of learning from within; "I think there is but one wise man in the hundred, and they cannot shoe a horse without him!"

And forth came the honest pedagogue, for such his dress bespoke him. A long, lean, shambling, stooping figure, was surmounted by a head thatched with lank black hair somewhat inclining to gray. His features had the cast of habitual authority, which I suppose Dionysius carried with him from the throne to the schoolmaster's pulpit, and bequeathed as a legacy to all of the same profession. A black buckram cassock was gathered at his middle with a belt, at which hung, instead of knife or weapon, a goodly leathern pen-and-ink-case. His ferula was stuck on the other side, like Harlequin's wooden sword; and he carried in his hand the tattered volume which he had been busily perusing.

On seeing a person of Tressilian's appearance, which he was better able to estimate than the country folks had been, the schoolmaster unbonneted, and accosted him with "*Salve, domine. Intelligisne linguam Latinam?*"

Tressilian mustered his learning to reply, "*Linguæ Latinæ haud penitus ignarus, venia tua, domine eruditissime, vernaculam libentius loquor.*"

The Latin reply had upon the schoolmaster the effect which the mason's sign is said to produce on the brethren of the trowel. He was at once interested in the learned traveller, listened with gravity to his story of a tired horse and a lost shoe, and then replied with solemnity, "It may appear a simple thing, most worshipful, to reply to you that there dwells, within a brief mile of these *tuguria*, the best *faber ferrarius*, the most accomplished blacksmith, that ever nailed iron upon horse. Now, were I to say so,

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I warrant me you would think yourself *compos voti*, or, as the vulgar have it, a made man."

"I should at least," said Tressilian, "have a direct answer to a plain question, which seems difficult to be obtained in this country."

"It is a mere sending of a sinful soul to the evil un," said the old woman, "the sending a living creature to Wayland Smith."

"Peace, Gammer Sludge!" said the pedagogue; "*pauca verba*, Gammer Sludge; look to the furmity, Gammer Sludge; *curetur jentaculum*, Gammer Sludge; this gentleman is none of thy gossips." Then turning to Tressilian, he resumed his lofty tone, "And so, most worshipful, you would really think yourself *felix bis terque*, should I point out to you the dwelling of this same smith?"

"Sir," replied Tressilian, "I should in that case have all that I want at present—a horse fit to carry me forward—out of hearing of your learning." The last words he muttered to himself.

"*O cæca mens mortalium!*" said the learned man; "well was it sung by Junius Juvenalis, '*numinibus vota exaudita malignis!*"

"Learned Magister," said Tressilian, "your erudition so greatly exceeds my poor intellectual capacity, that you must excuse my seeking elsewhere for information which I can better understand."

"There again now," replied the pedagogue, "how fondly you fly from him that would instruct you! Truly said Quintilian——"

"I pray, sir, let Quintilian be for the present, and answer, in a word and in English, if your learning can condescend so far, whether there is any place here where

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I can have opportunity to refresh my horse, until I can have him shod?"

"Thus much courtesy, sir," said the schoolmaster, "I can readily render you, that although there is in this poor hamlet (*nostra paupera regna*) no regular *hospitium*, as my namesake Erasmus calleth it, yet forasmuch as you are somewhat embued, or at least tinged as it were, with good letters, I will use my interest with the good woman of the house to accommodate you with a platter of furmity —an wholesome food, for which I have found no Latin phrase—your horse shall have a share of the cow-house, with a bottle of sweet hay, in which the good woman Sludge so much abounds, that it may be said of her cow, *fœnum habet in cornu;* and if it please you to bestow on me the pleasure of your company, the banquet shall cost you *ne semissem quidem*, so much is Gammer Sludge bound to me for the pains I have bestowed on the top and bottom of her hopeful heir Dickie, whom I have painfully made to travel through the accidence."

"Now, God yield ye for it, Mr. Herasmus," said the good Gammer, "and grant that little Dickie may be the better for his accident!—and for the rest, if the gentleman list to stay, breakfast shall be on the board in the wringing of a dishclout; and for horse-meat, and man's meat, I bear no such base mind as to ask a penny."

Considering the state of his horse, Tressilian, upon the whole, saw no better course than to accept the invitation thus learnedly made and hospitably confirmed, and take chance that when the good pedagogue had exhausted every topic of conversation, he might possibly condescend to tell him where he could find the smith they spoke of. He entered the hut accordingly, and sat down with the learned Magister Erasmus Holiday, partook of his fur

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mity, and listened to his learned account of himself for a good half hour, ere he could get him to talk upon any other topic. The reader will readily excuse our accompanying this man of learning into all the details with which he favoured Tressilian, of which the following sketch may suffice.

He was born at Hogsnorton, where, according to popular saying, the pigs play upon the organ; a proverb which he interpreted allegorically, as having reference to the herd of Epicurus, of which litter Horace confessed himself a porker. His name of Erasmus, he derived partly from his father having been the son of a renowned washer-woman, who had held that great scholar in clean linen all the while he was at Oxford; a task of some difficulty, as he was only possessed of two shirts, "the one," as she expressed herself, "to wash the other." The vestiges of one of these *camiciæ*, as Master Holiday boasted, were still in his possession, having fortunately been detained by his grandmother to cover the balance of her bill. But he thought there was a still higher and overruling cause for his having had the name of Erasmus conferred on him, namely, the secret presentiment of his mother's mind, that, in the babe to be christened, was a hidden genius, which should one day lead him to rival the fame of the great scholar of Amsterdam. The schoolmaster's surname led him as far into dissertation as his Christian appellative. He was inclined to think that he bore the name of Holiday *quasi lucus a non lucendo*, because he gave such few holidays to his school. "Hence," said he, "the schoolmaster is termed classically, *Ludi Magister*, because he deprives the boys of their play." And yet, on the other hand, he thought it might bear a very different interpretation, and refer to his own exquis-

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ite art in arranging pageants, morris-dances, May-day festivities, and such like holiday delights, for which he assured Tressilian he had positively the purest and the most inventive brain in England; insomuch, that his cunning in framing such pleasures had made him known to many honourable persons, both in country and in court, and especially to the noble Earl of Leicester—"And although he may now seem to forget me," he said, "in the multitude of state affairs, yet I am well assured, that had he some pretty pastime to array for entertainment of the Queen's Grace, horse and man would be seeking the humble cottage of Erasmus Holiday. *Parvo contentus*, in the meanwhile, I hear my pupils parse, and construe, worshipful sir, and drive away my time with the aid of the Muses. And I have at all times, when in correspondence with foreign scholars, subscribed myself Erasmus ab Die Fausto, and have enjoyed the distinction due to the learned under that title; witness the erudite Diedrichus Buckerschockius, who dedicated to me under that title his treatise on the letter *Tau*. In fine, sir, I have been a happy and distinguished man."

"Long may it be so, sir!" said the traveller; "but permit me to ask, in your own learned phrase, *Quid hoc ad Iphycli boves*—what has all this to do with the shoeing of my poor nag?"

"*Festina lente*," said the man of learning, "we will presently come to that point. You must know that some two or three years past, there came to these parts one who called himself Doctor Doboobie, although it may be he never wrote even *Magister artium*, save in right of his hungry belly. Or it may be, that if he had any degrees, they were of the devil's giving, for he was what the vulgar call a white witch—a cunning man, and such like.—

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Now, good sir, I perceive you are impatient; but if a man tell not his tale his own way, how have you warrant to think that he can tell it in yours?"

"Well, then, learned sir, take your way," answered Tressilian; "only let us travel at a sharper pace, for my time is somewhat of the shortest."

"Well, sir," resumed Erasmus Holiday, with the most provoking perseverance, "I will not say that this same Demetrius, for so he wrote himself when in foreign parts, was an actual conjurer, but certain it is, that he professed to be a brother of the mystical Order of the Rosy Cross, a disciple of Geber (*ex nomine cujus venit verbum vernaculum, gibberish.*) He cured wounds by salving the weapon instead of the sore—told fortunes by palmistry—discovered stolen goods by the sieve and shears—gathered the right maddow and the male fern seed, through use of which men walk invisible—pretended some advances towards the panacea, or universal elixir, and affected to convert good lead into sorry silver."

"In other words," said Tressilian, "he was a quacksalver and common cheat; but what has all this to do with my nag, and the shoe which he has lost?"

"With your worshipful patience," replied the diffusive man of letters, "you shall understand that presently,—*patientia*, then, right worshipful, which word, according to our Marcus Tullius, is '*difficilium rerum diurna perpessio.*' This same Demetrius Doboobie, after dealing with the country, as I have told you, began to acquire fame, *inter magnates*, among the prime men of the land, and there is likelihood he might have aspired to great matters, had not, according to vulgar fame, (for I aver not the thing as according with my certain knowledge,) the devil claimed his right, one dark night, and flown off

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with Demetrius, who was never seen or heard of afterwards. Now here comes the *medulla*, the very marrow of my tale. This Doctor Doboobie had a servant, a poor snake, whom he employed in trimming his furnace, regulating it by just measure—compounding his drugs—tracing his circles—cajoling his patients, *et sic de cæteris.* —Well, right worshipful, the Doctor being removed thus strangely, and in a way which struck the whole country with terror, this poor Zany thinks to himself, in the words of Maro, '*Uno avulso non deficit alter;*' and, even as a tradesman's apprentice sets himself up in his master's shop when he is dead, or hath retired from business, so doth this Wayland assume the dangerous trade of his defunct master. But although, most worshipful sir, the world is ever prone to listen to the pretensions of such unworthy men, who are, indeed, mere *saltim banqui* and *charlatani*, though usurping the style and skill of doctors of medicine, yet the pretensions of this poor Zany, this Wayland, were too gross to pass on them, nor was there a mere rustic, a villager, who was not ready to accost him in the sense of Persius, though in their own rugged words,—

> 'Diluis helleborum, certo compescere puncto
> Nescius examen? vetat hoc natura medendi;'

which I have thus rendered in a poor paraphrase of mine own,—

> Wilt thou mix hellebore, who doth not know
> How many grains should to the mixture go?
> The art of medicine this forbids, I trow.

Moreover, the evil reputation of the master, and his strange and doubtful end, or, at least, sudden disappearance, prevented any, excepting the most desperate of

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men, to seek any advice or opinion from the servant; wherefore the poor vermin was likely at first to swarf for very hunger. But the devil that serves him, since the death of Demetrius or Doboobie, put him on a fresh device. This knave, whether from the inspiration of the devil, or from early education, shoes horses better than e'er a man betwixt us and Iceland; and so he gives up his practice on the bipeds, the two-legged and unfledged species called mankind, and betakes him entirely to shoeing of horses."

"Indeed! and where does he lodge all this time?" said Tressilian. "And does he shoe horses well?—shew me his dwelling presently."

The interruption pleased not the *Magister*, who exclaimed, "*O, cæca mens mortalium!* though, by the way, I used that quotation before. But I would the classics could afford me any sentiment of power to stop those who are so willing to rush upon their own destruction. Hear but, I pray you, the conditions of this man," said he, in continuation, "ere you are so willing to place yourself within his danger——"

"A' takes no money for a's work," said the dame, who stood by, enraptured as it were with the fine words and learned apophthegms which glided so fluently from her erudite inmate, Master Holiday. But this interruption pleased not the Magister, more than that of the traveller.

"Peace," said he, "Gammer Sludge; know your place, if it be your will. *Sufflamina*, Gammer Sludge, and allow me to expound this matter to our worshipful guest. —Sir," said he, again addressing Tressilian, "this old woman speaks true, though in her own rude style; for certainly this *faber ferrarius*, or blacksmith, takes money of no one."

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"And that is a sure sign he deals with Satan," said Dame Sludge; "since no good Christian would ever refuse the wages of his labour."

"The old woman hath touched it again," said the pedagogue; "*rem acu tetigit*—she hath pricked it with her needle's point.—This Wayland takes no money, indeed, nor doth he shew himself to any one."

"And can this madman, for such I hold him," said the traveller, "know aught like good skill of his trade?"

"Oh, sir, in that let us give the devil his due—Mulciber himself, with all his Cyclops, could hardly amend him. But assuredly there is little wisdom in taking counsel or receiving aid from one, who is but too plainly in league with the author of evil."

"I must take my chance of that, good Master Holiday," said Tressilian, rising; "and as my horse must now have eaten his provender, I must needs thank you for your good cheer, and pray you to shew me this man's residence, that I may have the means of proceeding on my journey."

"Ay, ay, do ye shew him, Master Herasmus," said the old dame, who was, perhaps, desirous to get her house freed of her guest; "a' must needs go when the devil drives."

"*Do manus*," said the Magister, "I submit—taking the world to witness, that I have possessed this honourable gentleman with the full injustice which he has done and shall do to his own soul, if he becomes thus a trinketer with Satan. Neither will I go forth with our guest myself, but rather send my pupil.—*Ricarde! adsis, nebulo.*"

"Under your favour, not so," answered the old woman; "you may peril your own soul, if you list, but my son

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shall budge on no such errand; and I wonder at you, Dominie Doctor, to propose such a piece of service for little Dickie."

"Nay, my good Gammer Sludge," answered the preceptor, "Ricardus shall go but to the top of the hill, and indicate with his digit to the stranger the dwelling of Wayland Smith. Believe not that any evil can come to him; he having read this morning, fasting, a chapter of the Septuagint, and, moreover, having had his lesson in the Greek Testament."

"Ay," said his mother, "and I have sewn a sprig of witch's elm in the neck of un's doublet, ever since that foul thief has begun his practices on man and beast in these parts."

"And as he goes oft (as I hugely suspect) towards this conjurer for his own pastime, he may for once go thither, or near it, to pleasure us, and to assist this stranger.—*Ergo, heus Ricarde! adsis, quæso, mi didascule.*"

The pupil, thus affectionately invoked, at length came stumbling into the room; a queer, shambling, ill-made urchin, who, by his stunted growth, seemed about twelve or thirteen years old, though he was probably, in reality, a year or two older, with a carroty pate in huge disorder, a freckled sunburnt visage, with a snub nose, a long chin, and two peery gray eyes, which had a droll obliquity of vision, approaching to a squint, though perhaps not a decided one. It was impossible to look at the little man without some disposition to laugh, especially when Gammer Sludge, seizing upon and kissing him, in spite of his struggling and kicking in reply to her caresses, termed him her own precious pearl of beauty.

"*Ricarde*," said the preceptor, "you must forthwith (which is *profecto*) set forth so far as the top of the hill,

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and shew this man of worship Wayland Smith's workshop."

"A proper errand of a morning," said the boy, in better language than Tressilian expected; "and who knows but the devil may fly away with me before I come back?"

"Ay, marry may un," said Dame Sludge, "and you might have thought twice, Master Domine, ere you sent my dainty darling on arrow such errand. It is not for such doings I feed your belly and clothe your back, I warrant you!"

"Pshaw—*nugæ*, good Gammer Sludge," answered the preceptor; "I ensure you that Satan, if there be Satan in the case, shall not touch a thread of his garment; for Dickie can say his *pater* with the best, and may defend the foul fiend—*Eumenides, Stygiumque nefas.*"

"Ay, and I, as I said before, have sewed a sprig of the mountain-ash into his collar," said the good woman, "which will avail more than your clerkship, I wus; but for all that, it is ill to seek the devil or his mates either."

"My good boy," said Tressilian, who saw, from a grotesque sneer on Dickie's face, that he was more likely to act upon his own bottom than by the instructions of his elders, "I will give thee a silver groat, my pretty fellow, if you will but guide me to this man's forge."

The boy gave him a knowing side look, which seemed to promise acquiescence, while at the same time he exclaimed, "I be your guide to Wayland Smith's! Why, man, did I not say that the devil might fly off with me, just as the kite there" (looking to the window) "is flying off with one of grandam's chicks."

"The kite! the kite!" exclaimed the old woman in return, and forgetting all other matters in her alarm, has-

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tened to the rescue of her chicken as fast as her old legs could carry her.

"Now for it," said the urchin to Tressilian; "snatch your beaver, get out your horse, and have at the silver groat you spoke of."

"Nay, but tarry, tarry," said the preceptor, "*Suffla-mina Ricarde.*"

"Tarry yourself," said Dickie, "and think what answer you are to make to granny for sending me post to the devil."

The teacher, aware of the responsibility he was incurring, bustled up in great haste to lay hold of the urchin, and to prevent his departure; but Dickie slipped through his fingers, bolted from the cottage, and sped him to the top of a neighbouring rising ground; while the preceptor, despairing, by well-taught experience, of recovering his pupil by speed of foot, had recourse to the most honeyed epithets the Latin vocabulary affords, to persuade his return. But to *mi anime, corculum meum*, and all such classical endearments, the truant turned a deaf ear, and kept frisking on the top of the rising ground like a goblin by moonlight, making signs to his new acquaintance, Tressilian, to follow him.

The traveller lost no time in getting out his horse, and departing to join his elvish guide, after half forcing on the poor deserted teacher a recompense for the entertainment he had received, which partly allayed the terror he had for facing the return of the old lady of the mansion. Apparently this took place soon afterwards; for ere Tressilian and his guide had proceeded far on their journey, they heard the screams of a cracked female voice, intermingled with the classical objurgations of Master Erasmus Holiday. But Dickie Sludge, equally deaf to the

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voice of maternal tenderness and of magisterial authority, skipped on unconsciously before Tressilian, only observing, that "if they cried themselves hoarse, they might go lick the honey-pot, for he had eaten up all the honey-comb himself on yesterday even."

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CHAPTER X.

There entering in, they found the goodman selfe
Full busylie unto his work ybent,
Who was to weet a wretched wearish elf,
With hollow eyes and rawbone cheeks forspent,
As if he had been long in prison pent.

THE FAERY QUEENE.

"ARE we far from the dwelling of this smith, my pretty lad?" said Tressilian to his young guide.

"How is it you call me?" said the boy, looking askew at him with his sharp grey eyes.

"I call you my pretty lad—is there any offence in that, my boy?"

"No—but were you with my grandam and Dominie Holiday, you might sing chorus to the old song of

'We three
Tom-fools be.'"

"And why so, my little man?" said Tressilian.

"Because," answered the ugly urchin, "you are the only three ever called me pretty lad—Now my grandam does it because she is parcel blind by age, and whole blind by kindred—and my master, the poor Dominie, does it to curry favour, and have the fullest platter of furmity, and the warmest seat by the fire. But what you call me pretty lad for, you know best yourself."

"Thou art a sharp wag at least, if not a pretty one. But what do thy playfellows call thee?"

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"Hobgoblin," answered the boy, readily; "but for all that, I would rather have my own ugly viznomy than any of their jolterheads, that have no more brains in them than a brickbat."

"Then you fear not this smith, whom you are going to see?"

"Me fear him!" answered the boy; "if he were the devil folk think him, I would not fear him; but though there is something queer about him, he's no more a devil than you are, and that's what I would not tell to every one."

"And why do you tell it to me, then, my boy?" said Tressilian.

"Because you are another guess gentleman than those we see here every day," replied Dickie; "and though I am as ugly as sin, I would not have you think me an ass, especially as I may have a boon to ask of you one day."

"And what is that, my lad, whom I must not call pretty?" replied Tressilian.

"Oh, if I were to ask it just now," said the boy, "you would deny it me—but I will wait till we meet at court."

"At court, Richard! are you bound for court?" said Tressilian.

"Ay, ay, that's just like the rest of them," replied the boy; "I warrant me you think, what should such an ill-favoured, scrambling urchin do at court? But let Richard Sludge alone; I have not been cock of the roost here for nothing. I will make sharp wit mend foul feature."

"But what will your grandam say, and your tutor, Dominie Holiday?"

"E'en what they like," replied Dickie; "the one has her chickens to reckon, and the other has his boys to whip. I would have given them the candle to hold long

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since, and shewn this trumpery hamlet a fair pair of heels, but the Dominie promises I should go with him to bear share in the next pageant he is to set forth, and they say there are to be great revels shortly."

"And whereabout are they to be held, my little friend?" said Tressilian.

"Oh, at some castle far in the north," answered his guide—"a world's breadth from Berkshire. But our old Dominie holds that they cannot go forward without him; and it may be he is right, for he has put in order many a fair pageant. He is not half the fool you would take him for, when he gets to work he understands; and so he can spout verses like a play-actor, when, God wot, if you set him to steal a goose's egg, he would be drubbed by the gander."

"And you are to play a part in his next show?" said Tressilian, somewhat interested by the boy's boldness of conversation, and shrewd estimate of character.

"In faith," said Richard Sludge, in answer, "he hath so promised me; and if he break his word, it will be the worse for him; for let me take the bit between my teeth, and turn my head down hill, and I will shake him off with a fall that may harm his bones—And I should not like much to hurt him neither," said he, "for the tiresome old fool has painfully laboured to teach me all he could.—But enough of that—here are we at Wayland Smith's forge-door."

"You jest, my little friend," said Tressilian; "here is nothing but a bare moor, and that ring of stones, with a great one in the midst, like a Cornish barrow."

"Ay, and that great flat stone in the midst, which lies across the top of these uprights," said the boy, "is Wayland Smith's counter, that you must tell down your money upon."

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"What do you mean by such folly?" said the traveller, beginning to be angry with the boy, and vexed with himself for having trusted such a harebrained guide.

"Why," said Dickie, with a grin, "you must tie your horse to that upright stone that has the ring in't, and then you must whistle three times, and lay me down your silver groat on that other flat stone, walk out of the circle, sit down on the west side of that little thicket of bushes, and take heed you look neither to right nor to left for ten minutes, or so long as you shall hear the hammer clink, and whenever it ceases, say your prayers for the space you could tell a hundred,—or count over a hundred, which will do as well,—and then come into the circle; you will find your money gone and your horse shod."

"My money gone to a certainty!" said Tressilian; "but as for the rest—Hark ye, my lad, I am not your schoolmaster; but if you play off your waggery on me, I will take a part of his task off his hands, and punish you to purpose."

"Ay, when you catch me!" said the boy; and presently took to his heels across the heath, with a velocity which baffled every attempt of Tressilian to overtake him, loaded as he was with his heavy boots. Nor was it the least provoking part of the urchin's conduct, that he did not exert his utmost speed, like one who finds himself in danger, or who is frightened, but preserved just such a rate as to encourage Tressilian to continue the chase, and then darted away from him with the swiftness of the wind, when his pursuer supposed he had nearly run him down, doubling, at the same time, and winding, so as always to keep near the place from which he started.

This lasted until Tressilian, from very weariness, stood still, and was about to abandon the pursuit with a hearty

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curse on the ill-favoured urchin, who had engaged him in an exercise so ridiculous. But the boy, who had, as formerly, planted himself on the top of a hillock close in front, began to clap his long thin hands, point with his skinny fingers, and twist his wild and ugly features into such an extravagant expression of laughter and derision, that Tressilian began half to doubt whether he had not in view an actual hobgoblin.

Provoked extremely, yet at the same time feeling an irresistible desire to laugh, so very odd were the boy's grimaces and gesticulations, the Cornish man returned to his horse, and mounted him with the purpose of pursuing Dickie at more advantage.

The boy no sooner saw him mount his horse, than he hollo'd out to him, that rather than he should spoil his white-footed nag, he would come to him, on condition he would keep his fingers to himself.

"I will make no condition with thee, thou naughty varlet!" said Tressilian; "I will have thee at my mercy in a moment."

"Aha, Master Traveller," said the boy, "there is a marsh hard by would swallow all the horses of the Queen's Guard—I will into it, and see where you will go then.—You shall hear the bittern bump, and the wild-drake quack, ere you get hold of me without my consent, I promise you."

Tressilian looked out, and, from the appearance of the ground behind the hillock, believed it might be as the boy said, and accordingly determined to strike up a peace with so light-footed and ready-witted an enemy—"Come down," he said, "thou mischievous brat!—leave thy mopping and mowing, and come hither; I will do thee no harm, as I am a gentleman."

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The boy answered his invitation with the utmost confidence, and danced down from his stance with a galliard sort of step, keeping his eye at the same time fixed on Tressilian's, who once more dismounted, stood with his horse's bridle in his hand, breathless, and half exhausted with his fruitless exercise, though not one drop of moisture appeared on the freckled forehead of the urchin, which looked like a piece of dry and discoloured parchment, drawn tight across the brow of a fleshless skull.

"And tell me," said Tressilian, "why you use me thus, thou mischievous imp? or what your meaning is by telling me so absurd a legend as you wished but now to put on me? Or rather show me, in good earnest, this smith's forge, and I will give thee what will buy thee apples through the whole winter."

"Were you to give me an orchard of apples," said Dickie Sludge, "I can guide thee no better than I have done. Lay down the silver token on the flat stone—whistle three times—then come sit down on the western side of the thicket of gorse; I will sit by you, and give you free leave to wring my head off, unless you hear the smith at work within two minutes after we are seated."

"I may be tempted to take thee at thy word," said Tressilian, "if you make me do aught half so ridiculous for your own mischievous sport—however, I will prove your spell.—Here, then, I tie my horse to this upright stone—I must lay my silver groat here, and whistle three times, sayest thou?"

"Ay, but thou must whistle louder than an unfledged ousel," said the boy, as Tressilian, having laid down his money, and half ashamed of the folly he practised, made a careless whistle—"You must whistle louder than that, for who knows where the smith is that you call for?—

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He may be in the King of France's stables for what I know."

"Why, you said but now he was no devil," replied Tressilian.

"Man or devil," said Dickie, "I see that I must summon him for you;" and therewithal he whistled sharp and shrill, with an acuteness of sound that almost thrilled through Tressilian's brain—"That is what I call whistling," said he, after he had repeated the signal thrice; "and now to cover, to cover, or Whitefoot will not be shod this day."

Tressilian, musing what the upshot of this mummery was to be, yet satisfied there was to be some serious result, by the confidence with which the boy had put himself in his power, suffered himself to be conducted to that side of the little thicket of gorse and brushwood, which was farthest from the circle of stones, and there sat down: and as it occurred to him that, after all, this might be a trick for stealing his horse, he kept his hand on the boy's collar, determined to make him hostage for its safety."

"Now, hush and listen," said Dickie, in a low whisper; "you will soon hear the tack of a hammer that was never forged of earthly iron, for the stone it was made of was shot from the moon." And in effect Tressilian did immediately hear the light stroke of a hammer, as when a farrier is at work. The singularity of such a sound, in so very lonely a place, made him involuntarily start; but looking at the boy, and discovering, by the arch malicious expression of his countenance, that the urchin saw and enjoyed his slight tremor, he became convinced that the whole was a concerted stratagem, and determined to know by whom, or for what purpose, the trick was played off.

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Accordingly, he remained perfectly quiet all the time that the hammer continued to sound, being about the space usually employed in fixing a horse-shoe. But the instant the sound ceased, Tressilian, instead of interposing the space of time which his guide had requested, started up with his sword in his hand, ran around the thicket, and confronted a man in a farrier's leathern apron, but otherwise fantastically attired in a bear-skin dressed with the fur on, and a cap of the same, which almost hid the sooty and begrimed features of the wearer—"Come back, come back!" cried the boy to Tressilian, "or you will be torn to pieces—no man lives that looks on him."—In fact, the invisible smith (now fully visible) heaved up his hammer, and shewed symptoms of doing battle.

But when the boy observed that neither his own entreaties, nor the menaces of the farrier appeared to change Tressilian's purpose, but that, on the contrary, he confronted the hammer with his drawn sword, he exclaimed to the smith, in turn, "Wayland, touch him not, or you will come by the worse!—the gentleman is a true gentleman, and a bold."

"So thou hast betrayed me, Flibbertigibbet?" said the smith; "it shall be the worse for thee!"

"Be who thou wilt," said Tressilian, "thou art in no danger from me, so thou tell me the meaning of this practice, and why thou drivest thy trade in this mysterious fashion."

The smith, however, turning to Tressilian, exclaimed, in a threatening tone, "Who questions the Keeper of the Crystal Castle of Light, the Lord of the Green Lion, the Rider of the Red Dragon?—Hence!—avoid thee, ere I summon Talpack with his fiery lance, to quell, crush,

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and consume!" These words he uttered with violent gesticulation, mouthing, and flourishing his hammer.

"Peace, thou vile cozener, with thy gipsy cant!" replied Tressilian, scornfully, "and follow me to the next magistrate, or I will cut thee over the pate."

"Peace, I pray thee, good Wayland!" said the boy; "credit me, the swaggering vein will not pass here, you must cut boon whids!" *

"I think, worshipful sir," said the smith, sinking his hammer, and assuming a more gentle and submissive tone of voice, "that when so poor a man does his day's job, he might be permitted to work it out after his own fashion. Your horse is shod, and your farrier paid—What need you cumber yourself farther, than to mount and pursue your journey?"

"Nay, friend, you are mistaken," replied Tressilian, "every man has a right to take the mask from the face of a cheat and a juggler; and your mode of living raises suspicion that you are both."

"If you are so determined, sir," said the smith, "I cannot help myself save by force, which I were unwilling to use towards you, Master Tressilian; not that I fear your weapon, but because I know you to be a worthy, kind, and well-accomplished gentleman, who would rather help than harm a poor man that is in a strait."

"Well said, Wayland," said the boy, who had anxiously awaited the issue of their conference. "But let us to thy den, man, for it is ill for thy health to stand here talking in the open air."

"Thou art right, Hobgoblin," replied the smith; and going to the little thicket of gorse on the side nearest to

* "Give good words."—*Slang dialect.*

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the circle, and opposite to that at which his customer had so lately couched, he discovered a trap-door curiously covered with bushes, raised it, and, descending into the earth, vanished from their eyes. Notwithstanding Tressilian's curiosity, he had some hesitation at following the fellow into what might be a den of robbers, especially when he heard the smith's voice, issuing from the bowels of the earth, call out, "Flibbertigibbet, do you come last, and be sure to fasten the trap!"

"Have you seen enough of Wayland Smith now?" whispered the urchin to Tressilian, with an arch sneer, as if marking his companion's uncertainty.

"Not yet," said Tressilian, firmly; and shaking off his momentary irresolution, he descended into the narrow staircase, to which the entrance led, and was followed by Dickie Sludge, who made fast the trap-door behind him, and thus excluded every glimmer of daylight. The descent, however, was only a few steps, and led to a level passage of a few yards' length, at the end of which appeared the reflection of a lurid and red light. Arrived at this point, with his drawn sword in his hand, Tressilian found that a turn to the left admitted him and Hobgoblin, who followed closely, into a small square vault, containing a smith's forge, glowing with charcoal, the vapour of which filled the apartment with an oppressive smell, which would have been altogether suffocating, but that by some concealed vent the smithy communicated with the upper air. The light afforded by the red fuel, and by a lamp suspended in an iron chain, served to shew that, besides an anvil, bellows, tongs, hammers, a quantity of ready-made horse-shoes, and other articles proper to the profession of a farrier, there were also stoves, alembics, crucibles, retorts, and other instruments of alchemy.

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The grotesque figure of the smith, and the ugly but whimsical features of the boy, seen by the gloomy and imperfect light of the charcoal-fire and the dying lamp, accorded very well with all this mystical apparatus, and in that age of superstition would have made some impression on the courage of most men.

But nature had endowed Tressilian with firm nerves, and his education, originally good, had been too sedulously improved by subsequent study to give way to any imaginary terrors; and after giving a glance around him, he again demanded of the artist who he was, and by what accident he came to know and address him by his name.

"Your worship cannot but remember," said the smith, "that about three years since, upon Saint Lucy's Eve, there came a travelling juggler to a certain Hall in Devonshire, and exhibited his skill before a worshipful knight and a fair company—I see from your worship's countenance, dark as this place is, that my memory has not done me wrong."

"Thou hast said enough," said Tressilian, turning away, as wishing to hide from the speaker the painful train of recollections which his discourse had unconsciously awakened.

"The juggler," said the smith, "played his part so bravely, that the clowns and clown-like squires in the company held his art to be little less than magical; but there was one maiden of fifteen, or thereby, with the fairest face I ever looked upon, whose rosy cheek grew pale, and her bright eyes dim, at the sight of the wonders exhibited."

"Peace, I command thee, peace!" said Tressilian.

"I mean your worship no offence," said the fellow; "but I have cause to remember how, to relieve the young

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maiden's fears, you condescended to point out the mode in which these deceptions were practised, and to baffle the poor juggler by laying bare the mysteries of his art, as ably as if you had been a brother of his order.—She was indeed so fair a maiden, that, to win a smile of her a man might well——"

"Not a word more of her, I charge thee!" said Tressilian; "I do well remember the night you speak of—one of the few happy evenings my life has known."

"She is gone then," said the smith, interpreting after his own fashion the sigh with which Tressilian uttered these words—"She is gone, young, beautiful, and beloved as she was!—I crave your worship's pardon—I would have hammered on another theme—I see I have unwarily driven the nail to the quick."

This speech was made with a mixture of rude feeling which inclined Tressilian favourably to the poor artisan, of whom before he was inclined to judge very harshly. But nothing can so soon attract the unfortunate, as real or seeming sympathy with their sorrows.

"I think," proceeded Tressilian, after a minute's silence, "thou wert in those days a jovial fellow, who could keep a company merry by song, and tale, and rebeck, as well as by thy juggling tricks—why do I find thee a laborious handicraftsman, plying thy trade in so melancholy a dwelling, and under such extraordinary circumstances?"

"My story is not long," said the artist; "but your honour had better sit while you listen to it." So saying, he approached to the fire a three-footed stool, and took another himself, while Dickie Sludge, or Flibbertigibbet, as he called the boy, drew a cricket to the smith's feet, and looked up in his face with features which, as illumi-

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nated by the glow of the forge, seemed convulsed with intense curiosity—"Thou too," said the smith to him, "shalt learn, as thou well deservest at my hand, the brief history of my life, and, in troth, it were as well tell it thee as leave thee to ferret it out, since Nature never packed a shrewder wit into a more ungainly casket.—Well, sir, if my poor story may pleasure you, it is at your command:—But will you not taste a stoup of liquor? I promise you that even in this poor cell I have some in store."

"Speak not of it," said Tressilian, "but go on with thy story, for my leisure is brief."

"You shall have no cause to rue the delay," said the smith, "for your horse shall be better fed in the meantime than he hath been this morning, and made fitter for travel."

With that the artist left the vault, and returned after a few minutes' interval. Here, also, we pause, that the narrative may commence in another chapter.

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CHAPTER XI.

I say, my lord, can such a subtilty,
(But all his craft ye must not wot of me,
And somewhat help I yet to his working,)
That all the ground on which we ben riding,
Till that we come to Canterbury town,
He can all clean turnen so up so down,
And pave it all of silver and of gold.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S PROLOGUE—CANTERBURY TALES.

THE artist commenced his narrative in the following terms :—

"I was bred a blacksmith, and knew my art as well as e'er a black-thumb'd, leathern-apron'd, swart-faced knave of that noble mystery. But I tired of ringing hammer-tunes on iron stithies, and went out into the world, where I became acquainted with a celebrated juggler, whose fingers had become rather too stiff for legerdemain, and who wished to have the aid of an apprentice in his noble mystery. I served him for six years, until I was master of my trade—I refer myself to your worship, whose judgment cannot be disputed, whether I did not learn to ply the craft indifferently well?"

"Excellently," said Tressilian; "but be brief."

"It was not long after I had performed at Sir Hugh Robsart's in your worship's presence," said the artist, "that I took myself to the stage, and have swaggered with the bravest of them all, both at the Black Bull, the

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Globe, the Fortune, and elsewhere; but I know not how —apples were so plenty that year, that the lads in the two-penny gallery never took more than one bite out of them, and threw the rest of the pippin at whatever actor chanced to be on the stage. So I tired of it—renounced my half share in the company—gave my foil to my comrade—my buskins to the wardrobe, and shewed the theatre a clean pair of heels."

"Well, friend, and what," said Tressilian, "was your next shift?"

"I became," said the smith, "half partner, half domestic to a man of much skill and little substance, who practised the trade of a physicianer."

"In other words," said Tressilian, "you were Jack Pudding to a quacksalver."

"Something beyond that, let me hope, my good Master Tressilian," replied the artist; "and yet to say truth, our practice was of an adventurous description, and the pharmacy which I had acquired in my first studies for the benefit of horses was frequently applied to our human patients. But the seeds of all maladies are the same; and if turpentine, tar, pitch, and beef-suet, mingled with turmeric, gum-mastic, and one head of garlic, can cure the horse that hath been grieved with a nail, I see not but what it may benefit the man that hath been pricked with a sword. But my master's practice, as well as his skill, went far beyond mine, and dealt in more dangerous concerns. He was not only a bold and adventurous practitioner in physic, but also, if your pleasure so chanced to be, an adept who read the stars, and expounded the fortunes of mankind, genethliacally, as he called it, or otherwise. He was a learned distiller of simples, and a profound chemist—made several efforts to fix mercury,

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and judged himself to have made a fair hit at the philosopher's stone. I have yet a programme of his on that subject, which, if your honour understandeth, I believe you have the better, not only of all who read, but also of him who wrote it."

He gave Tressilian a scroll of parchment, bearing at top and bottom, and down the margin, the signs of the seven planets, curiously intermingled with talismanical characters and scraps of Greek and Hebrew. In the midst were some Latin verses from a cabalistical author, written out so fairly, that even the gloom of the place did not prevent Tressilian from reading them. The tenor of the original ran as follows :—

> " Si fixum solvas, faciasque volare solutum,
> Et volucrem figas, facient te vivere tutum;
> Si pariat ventum, valet auri pondere centum;
> Ventus ubi vult spirat—Capiat qui capere potest."

"I protest to you," said Tressilian, "all I understand of this jargon is, that the last words seem to mean, 'Catch who catch can.'"

"That," said the smith, "is the very principle that my worthy friend and master, Doctor Doboobie, always acted upon; until, being besotted with his own imaginations, and conceited of his high chemical skill, he began to spend, in cheating himself, the money which he had acquired in cheating others, and either discovered or built for himself, I could never know which, this secret elaboratory, in which he used to seclude himself both from patients and disciples, who doubtless thought his long and mysterious absences from his ordinary residence in the town of Farringdon, were occasioned by his progress in the mystic sciences, and his intercourse with the invisible world. Me also he tried to deceive; but though I con-

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tradicted him not, he saw that I knew too much of his secrets to be any longer a safe companion. Meanwhile, his name waxed famous, or rather infamous, and many of those who resorted to him did so under persuasion that he was a sorcerer. And yet his supposed advance in the occult sciences, drew to him the secret resort of men too powerful to be named, for purposes too dangerous to be mentioned. Men cursed and threatened him, and bestowed on me, the innocent assistant of his studies, the nickname of the Devil's foot-post, which procured me a volley of stones as soon as ever I ventured to shew my face in the street of the village. At length, my master suddenly disappeared, pretending to me that he was about to visit his elaboratory in this place, and forbidding me to disturb him till two days were past. When this period had elapsed, I became anxious, and resorted to this vault, where I found the fires extinguished and the utensils in confusion, with a note from the learned Doboobius, as he was wont to style himself, acquainting me that we should never meet again, bequeathing me his chemical apparatus and the parchment which I have just put into your hands, advising me strongly to prosecute the secret which it contained, which would infallibly lead me to the discovery of the grand magisterium."

"And didst thou follow this sage advice?" said Tressilian.

"Worshipful sir, no," replied the smith; "for being by nature cautious and suspicious, from knowing with whom I had to do, I made so many perquisitions before I ventured even to light a fire, that I at length discovered a small barrel of gunpowder, carefully hid beneath the furnace, with the purpose, no doubt, that as soon as I should commence the grand work of the transmutation of metals,

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the explosion should transmute the vault and all in it into a heap of ruins, which might serve at once for my slaughter-house and my grave. This cured me of alchemy, and fain would I have returned to the honest hammer and anvil; but who would bring a horse to be shod by the Devil's post? Meantime, I had won the regard of my honest Flibbertigibbet here, he being then at Farringdon with his master, the sage Erasmus Holiday, by teaching him a few secrets such as please youth at his age; and after much counsel together, we agreed, that since I could get no practice in the ordinary way, I should try how I could work out business among these ignorant boors, by practising upon their silly fears; and thanks to Flibbertigibbet, who hath spread my renown, I have not wanted custom. But it is won at too great risk, and I fear I shall be at length taken up for a wizard; so that I seek but an opportunity to leave this vault when I can have the protection of some worshipful person against the fury of the populace, in case they chance to recognize me."

"And art thou," said Tressilian, "perfectly acquainted with the roads in this country?"

"I could ride them every inch by midnight," answered Wayland Smith, which was the name this adept had assumed.

"Thou hast no horse to ride upon," said Tressilian.

"Pardon, me," replied Wayland; "I have as good a tit as ever yeoman bestrode; and I forgot to say it was the best part of the mediciner's legacy to me, excepting one or two of the choicest of his medical secrets, which I picked up without his knowledge and against his will."

"Get thyself washed and shaved, then," said Tressilian; "reform thy dress as well as thou canst, and fling

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away those grotesque trappings; and, so thou wilt be secret and faithful, thou shalt follow me for a short time, till thy pranks here are forgotten. Thou hast, I think, both address and courage, and I have matter to do that may require both."

Wayland Smith eagerly embraced the proposal, and protested his devotion to his new master. In a very few minutes he had made so great an alteration in his original appearance, by change of dress, trimming his beard and hair, and so forth, that Tressilian could not help remarking, that he thought he would stand in little need of a protector, since none of his old acquaintance were likely to recognise him.

"My debtors would not pay me money," said Wayland, shaking his head; "but my creditors of every kind would be less easily blinded. And, in truth, I hold myself not safe, unless under the protection of a gentleman of birth and character, as is your worship."

So saying, he led the way out of the cavern. He then called loudly for Hobgoblin, who, after lingering for an instant, appeared with the horse furniture, when Wayland closed, and sedulously covered up the trap-door, observing, it might again serve him at his need, besides that the tools were worth somewhat. A whistle from the owner brought to his side a nag that fed quietly on the common, and was accustomed to the signal. While he accoutred him for the journey, Tressilian drew his own girths faster, and in a few minutes both were ready to mount.

At this moment Sludge approached to bid them farewell.

"You are going to leave me, then, my old play-fellow," said the boy; "and there is an end of all our game at

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bo-peep with the cowardly lubbards whom I brought hither to have their broad-footed nags shod by the devil and his imps?"

"It is even so," said Wayland Smith; "the best friends must part, Flibbertigibbet; but thou, my boy, art the only thing in the Vale of Whitehorse which I shall regret to leave behind me."

"Well, I bid thee not farewell," said Dickie Sludge, "for you will be at these revels, I judge, and so shall I; for if Dominie Holiday take me not thither, by the light of day, which we see not in yonder dark hole, I will take myself there!"

"In good time," said Wayland; "but I pray you to do nought rashly."

"Nay, now you would make a child—a common child of me, and tell me of the risk of walking without leading strings. But before you are a mile from these stones, you shall know, by a sure token, that I have more of the hobgoblin about me than you credit; and I will so manage, that if you take advantage, you may profit by my prank."

"What dost thou mean, boy?" said Tressilian; but Flibbertigibbet only answered with a grin and a caper, and bidding both of them farewell, and, at the same time, exhorting them to make the best of their way from the place, he set them the example by running homeward with the same uncommon velocity with which he had baffled Tressilian's former attempts to get hold of him.

"It is in vain to chase him," said Wayland Smith; "for unless your worship is expert in lark-hunting, we should never catch hold of him—and besides, what would it avail? Better make the best of our way hence, as he advises."

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They mounted their horses accordingly, and began to proceed at a round pace, as soon as Tressilian had explained to his guide the direction in which he desired to travel.

After they had trotted nearly a mile, Tressilian could not help observing to his companion, that his horse felt more lively under him than even when he mounted in the morning.

"Are you avised of that?" said Wayland Smith, smiling. "That is owing to a little secret of mine. I mixed that with an handful of oats which shall save your worship's heels the trouble of spurring these six hours at least. Nay, I have not studied medicine and pharmacy for nought."

"I trust," said Tressilian, "your drugs will do my horse no harm?"

"No more than the mare's milk which foaled him," answered the artist; and was proceeding to dilate on the excellence of his recipe, when he was interrupted by an explosion as loud and tremendous as the mine which blows up the rampart of a beleaguered city. The horses started, and the riders were equally surprised. They turned to gaze in the direction from which the thunder-clap was heard, and beheld, just over the spot they had left so recently, a huge pillar of dark smoke rising high into the clear blue atmosphere. "My habitation is gone to wrack," said Wayland, immediately conjecturing the cause of the explosion—"I was a fool to mention the doctor's kind intentions towards my mansion before that limb of mischief Flibbertigibbet—I might have guessed he would long to put so rare a frolic into execution. But let us hasten on, for the sound will collect the country to the spot."

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So saying he spurred his horse, and Tressilian also quickening his speed, they rode briskly forward.

"This, then, was the meaning of the little imp's token which he promised us," said Tressilian: "had we lingered near the spot we had found it a love-token with a vengeance."

"He would have given us warning," said the smith; "I saw him look back more than once to see if we were off—'tis a very devil for mischief, yet not an ill-natured devil either. It were long to tell your honour how I became first acquainted with him, and how many tricks he played me. Many a good turn he did me too, especially in bringing me customers; for his great delight was to see them sit shivering behind the bushes when they heard the click of my hammer. I think Dame Nature, when she lodged a double quantity of brains in that misshapen head of his, gave him the power of enjoying other people's distresses, as she gave them the pleasure of laughing at his ugliness."

"It may be so," said Tressilian; "those who find themselves severed from society by peculiarities of form, if they do not hate the common bulk of mankind, are at least not altogether indisposed to enjoy their mishaps and calamities."

"But Flibbertigibbet," answered Wayland, "hath that about him which may redeem his turn for mischievous frolic; for he is as faithful when attached, as he is tricky and malignant to strangers; and, as I said before, I have cause to say so."

Tressilian pursued the conversation no farther; and they continued their journey towards Devonshire without farther adventure, until they alighted at an inn in the town of Marlborough, since celebrated for having given

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title to the greatest general (excepting one) whom Britain ever produced. Here the travellers received, in the same breath, an example of the truth of two old proverbs, namely, that *Ill news fly fast*, and that *Listeners seldom hear a good tale of themselves.*

The inn-yard was in a sort of combustion when they alighted; insomuch, that they could scarce get man or boy to take care of their horses, so full were the whole household of some news which flew from tongue to tongue, the import of which they were for some time unable to discover. At length, indeed, they found it respected matters which touched them nearly.

"What is the matter, say you, master?" answered, at length, the head hostler, in reply to Tressilian's repeated questions—"Why, truly, I scarce know myself. But here was a rider but now, who says that the devil hath flown away with him they called Wayland Smith, that won'd about three miles from the Whitehorse of Berkshire, this very blessed morning, in a flash of fire and a pillar of smoke, and rooted up the place he dwelt in, near that old cockpit of upright stones, as cleanly as if it had all been delved up for a cropping."

"Why, then," said an old farmer, "the more is the pity—for that Wayland Smith (whether he was the devil's crony or no I skill not) had a good notion of horse diseases, and it's to be thought the bots will spread in the country far and near, an Satan has not gien un time to leave his secret behind un."

"You may say that, Gaffer Grimesby," said the hostler in return; "I have carried a horse to Wayland Smith myself, for he passed all farriers in this country."

"Did you see him?" said Dame Alison Crane, mistress of the inn bearing that sign, and deigning to term

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husband the owner thereof, a mean-looking hop-o'-my-thumb sort of person, whose halting gait and long neck, and meddling henpecked insignificance, are supposed to have given origin to the celebrated old English tune of "My Dame hath a lame tame Crane."

On this occasion, he chirp'd out a repetition of his wife's question, "Didst see the devil, Jack Hostler, I say?"

"And what if I did see un, Master Crane?" replied Jack Hostler,—for, like all the rest of the household, he paid as little respect to his master as his mistress herself did.

"Nay, nought, Jack Hostler," replied the pacific Master Crane, "only if you saw the devil, methinks I would like to know what un's like?"

"You will know that one day, Master Crane," said his helpmate, "an ye mend not your manners, and mind your business, leaving off such idle palabras—But truly, Jack Hostler, I should be glad to know myself what like the fellow was."

"Why, Dame," said the hostler, more respectfully, "as for what he was like I cannot tell, nor no man else, for why I never saw un."

"And how didst thou get thine errand done," said Gaffer Grimesby, "if thou seedst him not?"

"Why, I had schoolmaster to write down ailment o' nag," said Jack Hostler; "and I went wi' the ugliest slip of a boy for my guide as ever man cut out o' lime-tree root to please a child withal."

"And what was it?—and did it cure your nag, Jack Hostler;"—was uttered and echoed by all who stood around.

"Why, how can I tell you what it was?" said the

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hostler; "simply it smelled and tasted—for I did make bold to put a pea's substance into my mouth—like hartshorn and savin mixed with vinegar—but then no hartshorn and savin ever wrought so speedy a cure—And I am dreading that if Wayland Smith be gone, the bots will have more power over horse and cattle."

The pride of art, which is certainly not inferior in its influence to any other pride whatever, here so far operated on Wayland Smith, that, notwithstanding the obvious danger of his being recognised, he could not help winking to Tressilian, and smiling mysteriously, as if triumphing in the undoubted evidence of his veterinary skill. In the meanwhile, the discourse continued.

"E'en let it be so," said a grave man in black, the companion of Gaffer Grimesby; "e'en let us perish under the evil God sends us, rather than the devil be our doctor."

"Very true," said Dame Crane; "and I marvel at Jack Hostler that he would peril his own soul to cure the bowels of a nag."

"Very true, mistress," said Jack Hostler, "but the nag was my master's; and had it been yours, I think ye would ha' held me cheap enow an I had feared the devil when the poor beast was in such a taking—For the rest, let the clergy look to it. Every man to his craft, says the proverb, the parson to the prayer-book, and the groom to his curry-comb."

"I vow," said Dame Crane, "I think Jack Hostler speaks like a good Christian and a faithful servant, who will spare neither body nor soul in his master's service. However, the devil has lifted him in time, for a Constable of the Hundred came hither this morning to get old Gaffer Pinniewinks, the trier of witches, to go with him

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to the Vale of Whitehorse to comprehend Wayland Smith, and put him to his probation. I helped Pinniewinks to sharpen his pincers and his poking-awl, and I saw the warrant from Justice Blindas."

"Pooh—pooh—the devil would laugh both at Blindas and his warrant, constable and witch-finder to boot," said Old Dame Crank, the Papist laundress; "Wayland Smith's flesh would mind Pinniewinks' awl no more than a cambric ruff minds a hot piccadilloe-needle. But tell me, gentlefolks, if the devil ever had such a hand among ye, as to snatch away your smiths, and your artists from under your nose, when the good Abbots of Abingdon had their own? By Our Lady, no!—they had their hallowed tapers, and their holy water, and their relics, and what not, could send the foulest fiends a-packing.—Go ask a heretic parson to do the like—But ours were a comfortable people."

"Very true, Dame Crank," said the hostler; "so said Simpkins of Simonburn when the curate kissed his wife,—'They are a comfortable people,' said he."

"Silence, thou foul-mouthed vermin," said Dame Crank; "is it fit for a heretic horse-boy like thee, to handle such a text as the Catholic clergy."

"In troth no, dame," replied the man of oats; "and as you yourself are now no text for their handling, dame, whatever may have been the case in your day, I think we had e'en better leave un alone."

At this last exchange of sarcasm, Dame Crank set up her throat, and began a horrible exclamation against Jack Hostler, under cover of which Tressilian and his attendant escaped into the house.

They had no sooner entered a private chamber, to which Goodman Crane himself had condescended to

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usher them, and despatched their worthy and obsequious host on the errand of procuring wine and refreshment, than Wayland Smith began to give vent to his self-importance.

"You see, sir," said he, addressing Tressilian, "that I nothing fabled in asserting that I possessed fully the mighty mystery of a farrier, or mareschal, as the French more honourably term us. These dog-hostlers, who, after all, are the better judges in such a case, know what credit they should attach to my medicaments. I call you to witness, worshipful Master Tressilian, that nought, save the voice of calumny and the hand of malicious violence, hath driven me forth from a station in which I held a place alike useful and honoured."

"I bear witness, my friend, but will reserve my listening," answered Tressilian, "for a safer time; unless, indeed, you deem it essential to your reputation, to be translated, like your late dwelling, by the assistance of a flash of fire. For you see your best friends reckon you no better than a mere sorcerer."

"Now, Heaven forgive them," said the artist, "who confound learned skill with unlawful magic! I trust a man may be as skilful, or more so, than the best chirurgeon ever meddled with horseflesh, and yet may be upon the matter little more than other ordinary men, or at the worst no conjurer."

"God forbid else!" said Tressilian. "But be silent just for the present, since here comes mine host with an assistant, who seems something of the least."

Every body about the inn, Dame Crank herself included, had been indeed so interested and agitated by the story they had heard of Wayland Smith, and by the new, varying, and more marvellous editions of the incident,

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which arrived from various quarters, that mine host, in his righteous determination to accommodate his guests, had been able to obtain the assistance of none of his household, saving that of a little boy, a junior tapster, of about twelve years old, who was called Sampson.

"I wish," he said, apologizing to his guests, as he set down a flagon of sack, and promised some food immediately,—"I wish the devil had flown away with my wife and my whole family instead of this Wayland Smith, who, I dare say, after all said and done, was much less worthy of the distinction which Satan has done him."

"I hold opinion with you, good fellow," replied Wayland Smith; "and I will drink to you upon that argument."

"Not that I would justify any man who deals with the devil," said mine host, after having pledged Wayland in a rousing draught of sack, "but that—Saw ye ever better sack, my masters?—but that, I say, a man had better deal with a dozen cheats and scoundrel fellows, such as this Wayland Smith, than with a devil incarnate, that takes possession of house and home, bed and board."

The poor fellow's detail of grievances was here interrupted by the shrill voice of his helpmate, screaming from the kitchen, to which he instantly hobbled, craving pardon of his guests. He was no sooner gone than Wayland Smith expressed, by every contemptuous epithet in the language, his utter scorn for a nincompoop who stuck his head under his wife's apron-string; and intimated, that, saving for the sake of the horses, which required both rest and food, he would advise his worshipful Master Tressilian to push on a stage farther, rather

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than pay a reckoning to such a mean-spirited, crow-trodden, henpecked coxcomb, as Gaffer Crane.

The arrival of a large dish of good cow-heel and bacon, something soothed the asperity of the artist, which wholly vanished before a choice capon, so delicately roasted that the lard frothed on it, said Wayland, like May-dew on a lily; and both Gaffer Crane and his good dame became, in his eyes, very painstaking, accommodating, obliging persons.

According to the manners of the times, the master and his attendant sat at the same table, and the latter observed, with regret, how little attention Tressilian paid to his meal. He recollected, indeed, the pain he had given by mentioning the maiden in whose company he had first seen him; but, fearful of touching upon a topic too tender to be tampered with, he chose to ascribe his abstinence to another cause.

"This fare is perhaps too coarse for your worship," said Wayland, as the limbs of the capon disappeared before his own exertions; "but had you dwelt as long as I have done in yonder dungeon, which Flibbertigibbet has translated to the upper element, a place where I dared hardly broil my food, lest the smoke should be seen without, you would think a fair capon a more welcome dainty."

"If you are pleased, friend," said Tressilian, "it is well. Nevertheless, hasten thy meal if thou canst, for this place is unfriendly to thy safety, and my concerns crave travelling."

Allowing, therefore, their horses no more rest than was absolutely necessary for them, they pursued their journey by a forced march as far as Bradford, where they reposed themselves for the night.

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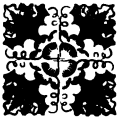
The next morning found them early travellers. And, not to fatigue the reader with unnecessary particulars, they traversed without adventure the counties of Wiltshire and Somerset, and about noon of the third day after Tressilian's leaving Cumnor, arrived at Sir Hugh Robsart's seat, called Lidcote Hall, on the frontiers of Devonshire.



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CHAPTER XII.

Ah me! the flower and blossom of your house,
The wind hath blown away to other towers.
JOANNA BAILLIE'S FAMILY LEGEND.

THE ancient seat of Lidcote Hall was situated near the village of the same name, and adjoined the wild and extensive forest of Exmoor, plentifully stocked with game, in which some ancient rights belonging to the Robsart family, entitled Sir Hugh to pursue his favourite amusement of the chase. The old mansion was a low, venerable building, occupying a considerable space of ground, which was surrounded by a deep moat. The approach and drawbridge were defended by an octagonal tower, of ancient brickwork, but so clothed with ivy and other creepers, that it was difficult to discover of what materials it was constructed. The angles of this tower were each decorated with a turret, whimsically various in form and in size, and, therefore, very unlike the monotonous stone pepper-boxes, which, in modern Gothic architecture, are employed for the same purpose. One of these turrets was square, and occupied as a clock-house. But the clock was now standing still; a circumstance peculiarly striking to Tressilian, because the good old knight, among other harmless peculiarities, had a fidgety anxiety about the exact measurement of time, very common to those who have a great deal of that commodity to dispose of,

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and find it lie heavy upon their hands,—just as we see shopkeepers amuse themselves with taking an exact account of their stock at the time there is least demand for it.

The entrance to the court-yard of the old mansion lay through an archway, surmounted by the aforesaid tower, but the drawbridge was down, and one leaf of the iron-studded folding-doors stood carelessly open. Tressilian hastily rode over the drawbridge, entered the court, and began to call loudly on the domestics by their names. For some time he was only answered by the echoes and the howling of the hounds, whose kennel lay at no great distance from the mansion, and was surrounded by the same moat. At length Will Badger, the old and favourite attendant of the knight, who acted alike as squire of his body, and superintendent of his sports, made his appearance. The stout, weather-beaten forester shewed great signs of joy when he recognised Tressilian.

"Lord love you," he said, "Master Edmund, be it thou in flesh and fell?—Then, thou mayest do some good on Sir Hugh, for it passes the wit of man, that is, of mine own, and the Curate's, and Master Mumblazen's, to do aught wi' un."

"Is Sir Hugh then worse since I went away, Will?" demanded Tressilian.

"For worse in body—no—he is much better," replied the domestic; "but he is clean mazed as it were—eats and drinks as he was wont—but sleeps not, or rather wakes not, for he is ever in a sort of twilight, that is neither sleeping nor waking. Dame Swineford thought it was like the dead palsy.—But, no, no, dame, said I, it is the heart, it is the heart."

"Can ye not stir his mind to any pastimes?" said Tressilian.

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"He is clean and quite off his sports," said Will Badger; "hath neither touched backgammon or shovel-board—nor looked on the big book of harrowtry wi' Master Mumblazen. I let the clock run down, thinking the missing the bell might somewhat move him, for you know, Master Edmund, he was particular in counting time; but he never said a word on't, so I may e'en set the old chime towling again. I made bold to tread on Bungay's tail too, and you know what a round rating that would ha' cost me once a-day—but he minded the poor tyke's whine no more than a madge howlet whooping down the chimney—so the case is beyond me."

"Thou shalt tell me the rest within doors, Will.—Meanwhile, let this person be ta'en to the buttery, and used with respect—He is a man of art."

"White art or black art, I would," said Will Badger, "that he had any art which could help us.—Here, Tom Butler, look to the man of art—and see that he steals none of thy spoons, lad," he added, in a whisper to the butler, who showed himself at a low window. "I have known as honest a faced fellow have art enough to do that."

He then ushered Tressilian into a low parlour, and went, at his desire, to see in what state his master was, lest the sudden return of his darling pupil, and proposed son-in-law, should affect him too strongly. He returned immediately, and said that Sir Hugh was dozing in his elbow-chair, but that Master Mumblazen would acquaint Master Tressilian the instant he awaked.

"But it is chance if he knows you," said the huntsman, "for he has forgotten the name of every hound in the pack. I thought about a week since, he had gotten a favourable turn:—'Saddle me old Sorrel,' said he, sud-

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denly, after he had taken his usual night draught out of the great silver grace cup, 'and take the hounds to Mount Hazelhurst to-morrow.' Glad men were we all, and out we had him in the morning, and he rode to cover as usual, with never a word spoken but that the wind was south, and the scent would lie. But ere we had uncoupled the hounds, he began to stare round him, like a man that wakes suddenly out of a dream—turns bridle and walks back to Hall again, and leaves us to hunt at leisure by ourselves, if we listed."

"You tell a heavy tale, Will," replied Tressilian; "but God must help us—there is no aid in man."

"Then you bring us no news of young Mistress Amy?—But what need I ask—your brow tells the story. Ever I hoped, that if any man could or would track her, it must be you. All's over and lost now. But if ever I have that Varney within reach of a flight-shot, I will bestow a forked shaft on him; and that I swear by salt and bread."

As he spoke, the door opened, and Master Mumblazen appeared; a withered, thin, elderly gentleman, with a cheek like a winter apple, and his gray hair partly concealed by a small high hat, shaped like a cone, or rather like such a strawberry-basket as London fruiterers exhibit at their windows. He was too sententious a person to waste words on mere salutation; so, having welcomed Tressilian with a nod and a shake of the hand, he beckoned him to follow to Sir Hugh's great chamber, which the good knight usually inhabited. Will Badger followed, unasked, anxious to see whether his master would be relieved from his state of apathy by the arrival of Tressilian.

In a long low parlour, amply furnished with implements

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of the chase, and with silvan trophies, by a massive stone chimney, over which hung a sword and suit of armour, somewhat obscured by neglect, sat Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote, a man of large size, which had been only kept within moderate compass by the constant use of violent exercise. It seemed to Tressilian that the lethargy, under which his old friend appeared to labour, had, even during his few weeks' absence, added bulk to his person, at least it had obviously diminished the vivacity of his eye, which, as they entered, first followed Master Mumblazen slowly to a large oaken desk, on which a ponderous volume lay open, and then rested, as if in uncertainty, on the stranger who had entered along with him. The Curate, a gray-headed clergyman, who had been a confessor in the days of Queen Mary, sat with a book in his hand in another recess in the apartment. He, too, signed a mournful greeting to Tressilian, and laid his book aside, to watch the effect his appearance should produce on the afflicted old man.

As Tressilian, his own eyes filling fast with tears, approached more and more nearly to the father of his betrothed bride, Sir Hugh's intelligence seemed to revive. He sighed heavily, as one who awakens from a state of stupor, a slight convulsion passed over his features, he opened his arms without speaking a word, and as Tressilian threw himself into them, he folded him to his bosom.

"There is something left to live for yet," were the first words he uttered; and while he spoke, he gave vent to his feelings in a paroxysm of weeping, the tears chasing each other down his sunburnt cheeks and long white beard.

"I ne'er thought to have thanked God to see my

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master weep," said Will Badger; "but now I do, though I am like to weep for company."

"I will ask thee no questions," said the old knight; "no questions—none, Edmund—thou hast not found her, or so found her, that she were better lost."

Tressilian was unable to reply, otherwise than by putting his hands before his face.

"It is enough—it is enough. But do not thou weep for her, Edmund. I have cause to weep, for she was my daughter,—thou hast cause to rejoice, that she did not become thy wife.—Great God! thou knowest best what is good for us—It was my nightly prayer that I should see Amy and Edmund wedded,—had it been granted, it had now been gall added to bitterness."

"Be comforted, my friend," said the Curate, addressing Sir Hugh, "it cannot be that the daughter of all our hopes and affections is the vile creature you would bespeak her."

"Oh, no," replied Sir Hugh, impatiently, "I were wrong to name broadly the base thing she is become—there is some new court name for it, I warrant me. It is honour enough for the daughter of an old De'nshire clown to be the leman of a gay courtier,—of Varney too,—of Varney, whose grandsire was relieved by my father, when his fortune was broken at the battle of—the battle of—where Richard was slain—out on my memory!—and I warrant none of you will help me——"

"The battle of Bosworth," said Master Mumblazen, "stricken between Richard Crookback and Henry Tudor, grandsire of the Queen that now is, *primo Henrici Septimi;* and in the year one thousand four hundred and eighty-five *post Christum natum.*"

"Ay, even so," said the old Knight, "every child

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knows it—But my poor head forgets all it should remember, and remembers only what it would most willingly forget. My brain has been at fault, Tressilian, almost ever since thou hast been away, and even yet it hunts counter."

"Your worship," said the good clergyman, "had better retire to your apartment, and try to sleep for a little space,—the physician left a composing draught,—and our Great Physician has commanded us to use earthly means, that we may be strengthened to sustain the trials he sends us."

"True, true, old friend," said Sir Hugh, "and we will bear our trials manfully—We have lost but a woman.—See Tressilian,"—he drew from his bosom a long ringlet of fair hair,—"see this lock!—I tell thee, Edmund, the very night she disappeared, when she bid me good even, as she was wont, she hung about my neck, and fondled me more than usual; and I, like an old fool, held her by this lock, until she took her scissors, severed it, and left it in my hand,—as all I was ever to see more of her."

Tressilian was unable to reply, well judging what a complication of feelings must have crossed the bosom of the unhappy fugitive at that cruel moment. The clergyman was about to speak, but Sir Hugh interrupted him.

"I know what you would say, Master Curate—after all, it is but a lock of woman's tresses,—and by woman, shame, and sin, and death, came into an innocent world —And learned Master Mumblazen, too, can say scholarly things of their inferiority."

"*C'est l'homme*," said Master Mumblazen, "*qui se bast, et qui conseille.*"

"True," said Sir Hugh, "and we will bear us, therefore, like men who have both mettle and wisdom in us.—

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Tressilian, thou art as welcome as if thou hadst brought better news. But we have spoken too long dry-lipped.—Amy, fill a cup of wine to Edmund, and another to me." Then instantly recollecting that he had called upon her who could not hear, he shook his head, and said to the clergyman, "This grief is to my bewildered mind what the Church of Lidcote is to our park: we may lose ourselves among the briars and thickets for a little space, but from the end of each avenue we see the old gray steeple and the grave of my forefathers. I would I were to travel that road to-morrow."

Tressilian and the Curate joined in urging the exhausted old man to lay himself to rest, and at length prevailed. Tressilian remained by his pillow till he saw that slumber at length sunk down on him, and then returned to consult with the Curate, what steps should be adopted in these unhappy circumstances.

They could not exclude from these deliberations Master Michael Mumblazen; and they admitted him the more readily, that besides what hopes they entertained from his sagacity, they knew him to be so great a friend to taciturnity, that there was no doubt of his keeping counsel. He was an old bachelor, of good family, but small fortune, and distantly related to the House of Robsart; in virtue of which connexion, Lidcote Hall had been honoured with his residence for the last twenty years. His company was agreeable to Sir Hugh, chiefly on account of his profound learning, which, though it only related to heraldry and genealogy, with such scraps of history as connected themselves with these subjects, was precisely of a kind to captivate the good old knight; besides the convenience which he found in having a friend to appeal to, when his own memory, as frequently happened, proved

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infirm, and played him false concerning names and dates, which, and all similar deficiencies, Master Michael Mumblazen supplied with due brevity and discretion. And, indeed, in matters concerning the modern world, he often gave, in his enigmatical and heraldic phrase, advice which was well worth attending to, or in Will Badger's language, started the game while others beat the bush.

"We have had an unhappy time of it with the good Knight, Master Edmund," said the Curate. "I have not suffered so much since I was torn away from my beloved flock, and compelled to abandon them to the Romish wolves."

"That was in *Tertio Mariæ*," said Master Mumblazen.

"In the name of Heaven," continued the Curate, "tell us, has your time been better spent than ours, or have you any news of that unhappy maiden, who, being for so many years the principal joy of this broken-down house, is now proved our greatest unhappiness? Have you not at least discovered her place of residence?"

"I have," replied Tressilian. "Know you Cumnor-Place, near Oxford?"

"Surely," said the clergyman; "it was a house of removal for the monks of Abingdon."

"Whose arms," said Master Michael, "I have seen over a stone chimney in the hall—a cross patonee betwixt four martlets."

"There," said Tressilian, "this unhappy maiden resides, in company with the villain Varney. But for a strange mishap, my sword had revenged all our injuries, as well as hers, on his worthless head."

"Thank God, that kept thine hand from blood-guiltiness, rash young man!" answered the Curate. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it. It

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were better study to free her from the villain's nets of infamy."

"They are called in heraldry, *laquei amoris*, or *laes d'amour*," said Mumblazen.

"It is in that I require your aid, my friends," said Tressilian; "I am resolved to accuse this villain, at the very foot of the throne, of falsehood, seduction, and breach of hospitable laws. The Queen shall hear me, though the Earl of Leicester, the villain's patron, stood at her right hand."

"Her Grace," said the Curate, "hath set a comely example of continence to her subjects, and will doubtless do justice on this inhospitable robber. But wert thou not better apply to the Earl of Leicester, in the first place, for justice on his servant? If he grants it, thou dost save the risk of making thyself a powerful adversary, which will certainly chance, if, in the first instance, you accuse his master of the horse, and prime favourite before the Queen."

"My mind revolts from your counsel," said Tressilian. "I cannot brook to plead my noble patron's cause—the unhappy Amy's cause—before any one save my lawful Sovereign. Leicester, thou wilt say, is noble—be it so—he is but a subject like ourselves, and I will not carry my plaint to him, if I can do better. Still, I will think on what thou hast said,—but I must have your assistance to persuade the good Sir Hugh to make me his commissioner and fiduciary in this matter, for it is in his name I must speak, and not in my own. Since she is so far changed, as to dote upon this empty profligate courtier, he shall at least do her the justice which is yet in his power."

"Better she died *cœlebs* and *sine prole*," said Mum-

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blazen, with more animation than he usually expressed, "than part, *per pale*, the noble coat of Robsart with that of such a miscreant!"

"If it be your object, as I cannot question," said the clergyman, "to save, as much as is yet possible, the credit of this unhappy young woman, I repeat, you should apply, in the first instance, to the Earl of Leicester. He is as absolute in his household as the Queen in her kingdom, and if he expresses to Varney that such is his pleasure, her honour will not stand so publicly committed."

"You are right, you are right," said Tressilian eagerly, "and I thank you for pointing out what I overlooked in my haste. I little thought ever to have besought grace of Leicester; but I could kneel to the proud Dudley, if doing so could remove one shade of shame from this unhappy damsel. You will assist me then to procure the necessary powers from Sir Hugh Robsart?"

The Curate assured him of his assistance, and the herald nodded assent.

"You must hold yourselves also in readiness to testify, in case you are called upon, the open-hearted hospitality which our good patron exercised towards this deceitful traitor, and the solicitude with which he laboured to seduce his unhappy daughter."

"At first," said the clergyman, "she did not, as it seemed to me, much affect his company, but latterly I saw them often together."

"*Seiant* in the parlour," said Michael Mumblazen, "and *passant* in the garden."

"I once came on them by chance," said the priest, "in the South wood, in a spring evening—Varney was muffled in a russet cloak, so that I saw not his face,—they separated hastily, as they heard me rustle amongst

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the leaves, and I observed she turned her head and looked long after him."

"With neck *reguardant*," said the herald—"and on the day of her flight, and that was on Saint Austen's Eve, I saw Varney's groom, attired in his liveries, hold his master's horse and Mistress Amy's palfrey, bridled and saddled *proper*, behind the wall of the churchyard."

"And now is she found mewed up in his secret place of retirement," said Tressilian. "The villain is taken in the manner; and I well wish he may deny his crime, that I may thrust conviction down his false throat! But I must prepare for my journey. Do you, gentlemen, dispose my patron to grant me such powers as are needful to act in his name."

So saying, Tressilian left the room.

"He is too hot," said the Curate; "and I pray to God that he may grant him the patience to deal with Varney as is fitting."

"Patience and Varney," said Mumblazen, "is worse heraldry than metal upon metal. He is more false than a siren, more rapacious than a griffin, more poisonous than a wyvern, and more cruel than a lion rampant."

"Yet I doubt much," said the Curate, "whether we can with all right ask from Sir Hugh Robsart, being in his present condition, any deed deputing his paternal right in Mistress Amy to whomsoever——"

"Your reverence need not doubt that," said Will Badger, who entered as he spoke, "for I will lay my life he is another man when he wakes, than he has been these thirty days past."

"Ay, Will," said the Curate, "hast thou then so much confidence in Doctor Diddleum's draught?"

"Not a whit," said Will, "because master ne'er tasted

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a drop on't, seeing it was emptied out by the housemaid. But here's a gentleman, who came attending on Master Tressilian, has given Sir Hugh a draught that is worth twenty of yon un. I have spoken cunningly with him, and a better farrier, or one who hath a more just notion of horse and dog ailment, I have never seen; and such a one would never be unjust to a Christian man."

"A farrier! you saucy groom—And by whose authority, pray?" said the Curate, rising in surprise and indignation; "or who will be warrant for this new physician?"

"For authority, an it like your reverence, he had mine; and for warrant, I trust I have not been five-and-twenty years in this house, without having right to warrant the giving of a draught to beast or body—I who can gie a drench, and a ball, and bleed, or blister, if need, to my very self."

The counsellors of the house of Robsart thought it meet to carry this information instantly to Tressilian, who as speedily summoned before him Wayland Smith, and demanded of him, (in private, however,) by what authority he had ventured to administer any medicine to Sir Hugh Robsart?

"Why," replied the artist, "your worship cannot but remember that I told you I had made more progress into my master's—I mean the learned Doctor Doboobie's—mystery than he was willing to own; and indeed, half of his quarrel and malice against me was, that, besides that I got something too deep into his secrets, several discerning persons, and particularly a buxom young widow of Abingdon, preferred my prescriptions to his."

"None of thy buffoonery, sir," said Tressilian, sternly. "If thou hast trifled with us—much more, if thou hast done aught that may prejudice Sir Hugh Robsart's

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health, thou shalt find thy grave at the bottom of a tin-mine."

"I know too little of the great *arcanum* to convert the ore to gold," said Wayland, firmly. "But truce to your apprehensions, Master Tressilian—I understood the good Knight's case, from what Master William Badger told me, and I hope I am able enough to administer a poor dose of mandragorn, which, with the sleep that must needs follow, is all that Sir Hugh Robsart requires to settle his distraught brains."

"I trust thou dealest fairly with me, Wayland?" said Tressilian.

"Most fairly and honestly, as the event shall shew," replied the artist. "What would it avail me to harm the poor old man for whom you are interested? you, to whom I owe it, that Gaffer Pinniewinks is not even now rending my flesh and sinews with his accursed pincers, and probing every mole in my body with his sharpened awl (a murrain on the hands which forged it!) in order to find out the witch's mark!—I trust to yoke myself as a humble follower to your worship's train, and I only wish to have my faith judged of by the result of the good Knight's slumbers."

Wayland Smith was right in his prognostication. The sedative draught which his skill had prepared, and Will Badger's confidence had administered, was attended with the most beneficial effects. The patient's sleep was long and healthful; and the poor old Knight awoke, humbled indeed in thought, and weak in frame, yet a much better judge of whatever was subjected to his intellect than he had been for some time past. He resisted for a while the proposal made by his friends, that Tressilian should undertake a journey to court, to attempt the recovery of

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his daughter, and the redress of her wrongs, in so far as they might yet be repaired. "Let her go," he said "she is but a hawk that goes down the wind; I would not bestow even a whistle to reclaim her." But though he for some time maintained this argument, he was at length convinced it was his duty to take the part to which natural affection inclined him, and consent that such efforts as could yet be made should be used by Tressilian in behalf of his daughter. He subscribed, therefore, a warrant of attorney, such as the Curate's skill enabled him to draw up; for in those simple days the clergy were often the advisers of their flock in law, as well as in gospel.

All matters were prepared for Tressilian's second departure, within twenty-four hours after he had returned to Lidcote Hall; but one material circumstance had been forgotten, which was first called to the remembrance of Tressilian by Master Mumblazen. "You are going to court, Master Tressilian," said he; "you will please remember, that your blazonry must be *argent*, and *or*—no other tinctures will pass current." The remark was equally just and embarrassing. To prosecute a suit at court, ready money was as indispensable even in the golden days of Elizabeth as at any succeeding period; and it was a commodity little at the command of the inhabitants of Lidcote Hall. Tressilian was himself poor; the revenues of good Sir Hugh Robsart were consumed, and even anticipated, in his hospitable mode of living; and it was finally necessary that the herald who started the doubt should himself solve it. Master Michael Mumblazen did so by producing a bag of money, containing nearly three hundred pounds in gold and silver of various coinage, the savings of twenty years; which he

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now, without speaking a syllable upon the subject, dedicated to the service of the patron whose shelter and protection had given him the means of making this little hoard. Tressilian accepted it without affecting a moment's hesitation, and a mutual grasp of the hand was all that passed betwixt them, to express the pleasure which the one felt in dedicating his all to such a purpose, and that which the other received from finding so material an obstacle to the success of his journey so suddenly removed, and in a manner so unexpected.

While Tressilian was making preparations for his departure early the ensuing morning, Wayland Smith desired to speak with him; and, expressing his hope that he had been pleased with the operation of his medicine in behalf of Sir Hugh Robsart, added his desire to accompany him to court. This was indeed what Tressilian himself had several times thought of; for the shrewdness, alertness of understanding, and variety of resource, which this fellow had exhibited during the time they had travelled together, had made him sensible that his assistance might be of importance. But then Wayland was in danger from the grasp of law; and of this Tressilian reminded him, mentioning something, at the same time, of the pincers of Pinniewinks, and the warrant of Master Justice Blindas. Wayland Smith laughed both to scorn.

"See you, sir!" said he, "I have changed my garb from that of a farrier to a serving-man; but were it still as it was, look at my mustaches—they now hang down—I will but turn them up, and dye them with a tincture that I know of, and the devil will scarce know me again."

He accompanied these words with the appropriate action; and in less than a minute, by setting up his mustaches and his hair, he seemed a different person from

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him that had but now entered the room. Still, however, Tressilian hesitated to accept his services, and the artist became proportionably urgent.

"I owe you life and limb," he said, "and I would fain pay a part of the debt, especially as I know from Will Badger on what dangerous service your worship is bound. I do not, indeed, pretend to be what is called a man of mettle, one of those ruffling tear-cats, who maintain their master's quarrel with sword and buckler. Nay, I am even one of those who hold the end of a feast better than the beginning of a fray. But I know that I can serve your worship better in such quest as yours, than any of these sword-and-dagger men, and that my head will be worth an hundred of their hands."

Tressilian still hesitated. He knew not much of this strange fellow, and was doubtful how far he could repose in him the confidence necessary to render him an useful attendant upon the present emergency. Ere he had come to a determination, the trampling of a horse was heard in the court-yard, and Master Mumblazen and Will Badger both entered hastily into Tressilian's chamber, speaking almost at the same moment.

"Here is a serving-man on the bonniest gray tit I ever see'd in my life," said Will Badger, who got the start; ——"having on his arm a silver cognizance, being a fire-drake holding in his mouth a brick-bat, under a coronet of an Earl's degree," said Master Mumblazen, "and bearing a letter sealed of the same."

Tressilian took the letter, which was addressed "To the worshipful Master Edmund Tressilian, our loving kinsman—These—ride, ride, ride,—for thy life, for thy life, for thy life." He then opened it, and found the following contents :—

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"MASTER TRESSILIAN, OUR
GOOD FRIEND AND COUSIN,

"We are at present so ill at ease, and otherwise so unhappily circumstanced, that we are desirous to have around us those of our friends on whose loving kindness we can most especially repose confidence; amongst whom we hold our good Master Tressilian one of the foremost and nearest, both in good will and good ability. We therefore pray you, with your most convenient speed, to repair to our poor lodging, at Say's Court, near Deptford, where we will treat farther with you of matters which we deem it not fit to commit unto writing. And so we bid you heartily farewell, being your loving kinsman to command,

"RATCLIFFE, EARL OF SUSSEX."

"Send up the messenger instantly, Will Badger," said Tressilian; and as the man entered the room, he exclaimed, "Aha, Stevens, is it you? how does my good lord?"

"Ill, Master Tressilian," was the messenger's reply, "and having therefore the more need of good friends around him."

"But what is my lord's malady?" said Tressilian, anxiously, "I heard nothing of his being ill."

"I know not, sir," replied the man; "he is very ill at ease. The leeches are at a stand, and many of his household suspect foul practice,—witchcraft, or worse."

"What are the symptoms?" said Wayland Smith, stepping forward hastily.

"Anan?" said the messenger, not comprehending his meaning.

"What does he ail?" said Wayland; "where lies his disease?"

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The man looked at Tressilian, as if to know whether he should answer these inquiries from a stranger, and receiving a sign in the affirmative, he hastily enumerated gradual loss of strength, nocturnal perspiration, and loss of appetite, faintness, &c.

"Joined," said Wayland, "to a gnawing pain in the stomach, and a low fever?"

"Even so," said the messenger, somewhat surprised.

"I know how the disease is caused," said the artist, "and I know the cause. Your master has eaten of the manna of Saint Nicholas. I know the cure too—my master shall not say I studied in his laboratory for nothing."

"How mean you?" said Tressilian, frowning; "we speak of one of the first nobles of England. Bethink you, this is no subject for buffoonery."

"God forbid!" said Wayland Smith. "I say that I know his disease, and can cure him. Remember what I did for Sir Hugh Robsart."

"We will set forth instantly," said Tressilian. "God calls us."

Accordingly, hastily mentioning this new motive for his instant departure, though without alluding to either the suspicions of Stevens, or the assurances of Wayland Smith, he took the kindest leave of Sir Hugh and the family at Lidcote Hall, who accompanied him with prayers and blessings, and, attended by Wayland and the Earl of Sussex's domestic, travelled with the utmost speed towards London.

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CHAPTER XIII.

———Ay, I know you have arsenic,
Vitriol, sal-tartre, argaile, alkaly,
Cinoper: I know all.—This fellow, Captain,
Will come in time to be a great distiller,
And give a say (I will not say directly,
But very near) at the philosopher's stone.
THE ALCHEMIST.

TRESSILIAN and his attendants pressed their route with all despatch. He had asked the smith, indeed, when their departure was resolved on, whether he would not rather choose to avoid Berkshire, in which he had played a part so conspicuous? But Wayland returned a confident answer. He had employed the short interval they passed at Lidcote Hall in transforming himself in a wonderful manner. His wild and overgrown thicket of beard was now restrained to two small mustaches on the upper lip, turned up in a military fashion. A tailor from the village of Lidcote (well paid) had exerted his skill, under his customer's directions, so as completely to alter Wayland's outward man, and take off from his appearance almost twenty years of age. Formerly, besmeared with soot and charcoal—overgrown with hair, and bent double with the nature of his labour—disfigured too by his odd and fantastic dress, he seemed a man of fifty years old. But now, in a handsome suit of Tressilian's livery, with a sword by his side, and a buckler on his shoulder, he

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looked like a gay ruffling serving-man, whose age might be betwixt thirty and thirty-five, the very prime of human life. His loutish savage-looking demeanour seemed equally changed, into a forward, sharp, and impudent alertness of look and action.

When challenged by Tressilian, who desired to know the cause of a metamorphosis so singular and so absolute, Wayland only answered by singing a stave from a comedy, which was then new, and was supposed, among the more favourable judges, to augur some genius on the part of the author. We are happy to preserve the couplet, which ran exactly thus,—

> "Ban, ban, ca Caliban—
> Get a new master—Be a new man."

Although Tressilian did not recollect the verses, yet they reminded him that Wayland had once been a stage-player, a circumstance which, of itself, accounted indifferently well for the readiness with which he could assume so total a change of personal appearance. The artist himself was so confident of his disguise being completely changed, or of his having completely changed his disguise, which may be the more correct mode of speaking, that he regretted they were not to pass near his old place of retreat.

"I could venture," he said, "in my present dress, and with your worship's backing, to face Master Justice Blindas, even on a day of Quarter Sessions; and I would like to know what is become of Hobgoblin, who is like to play the devil in the world, if he can once slip the string, and leave his granny and his Dominie,—Ay, and the scathed vault!" he said; "I would willingly have seen what havoc the explosion of so much gunpowder has made among Doctor Demetrius Doboobie's retorts and

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phials. I warrant me, my fame haunts the Vale of the Whitehorse long after my body is rotten; and that many a lout ties up his horse, lays down his silver groat, and pipes like a sailor whistling in a calm, for Wayland Smith to come and shoe his tit for him. But the horse will catch the founders ere the smith answers the call."

In this particular, indeed, Wayland proved a true prophet; and so easily do fables rise, that an obscure tradition of his extraordinary practice in farriery prevails in the Vale of Whitehorse even unto this day; and neither the tradition of Alfred's Victory, nor of the celebrated Pusey Horn, are better preserved in Berkshire than the wild legend of Wayland Smith.*

The haste of the travellers admitted their making no stay upon their journey, save what the refreshment of

* The great defeat, given by Alfred to the Danish invaders, is said, by Mr. Gough, to have taken place near Ashdown, in Berkshire. "The burial-place of Baereg, the Danish chief, who was slain in this fight, is distinguished by a parcel of stones less than a mile from the hill, set on edge, enclosing a piece of ground somewhat raised. On the east side of the southern extremity, stand three squarish flat stones, of about four or five feet over either way, supporting a fourth, and now called by the vulgar WAYLAND SMITH, from an idle tradition about an invisible smith replacing lost horse-shoes there."—GOUGH'S *Edition of Camden's Britannia*, vol. i. p. 221.

The popular belief still retains memory of this wild legend, which, connected as it is with the sight of a Danish sepulchre, may have arisen from some legend concerning the northern Duergar, who resided in the rocks, and were cunning workers in steel and iron. It was believed that Wayland Smith's fee was sixpence, and that, unlike other workmen, he was offended if more was offered. Of late his offices have been again called to memory; but fiction has in this, as in other cases, taken the liberty to pillage the stores of oral tradition. This monument must be very ancient, for it has been kindly pointed out to me that it is referred to in an ancient Saxon charter, as a land-mark. The monument has been of late cleared out, and made considerably more conspicuous.

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the horses required; and as many of the places through which they passed were under the influence of the Earl of Leicester, or persons immediately dependent on him, they thought it prudent to disguise their names, and the purpose of their journey. On such occasions the agency of Wayland Smith (by which name we shall continue to distinguish the artist, though his real name was Lancelot Wayland) was extremely serviceable. He seemed, indeed, to have a pleasure in displaying the alertness with which he could baffle investigation, and amuse himself by putting the curiosity of tapsters and innkeepers on a false scent. During the course of their brief journey, three different and inconsistent reports were circulated by him on their account; namely, first, that Tressilian was the Lord Deputy of Ireland, come over in disguise to take the Queen's pleasure concerning the great rebel Rory Oge MacCarthy MacMahon; secondly, that the said Tressilian was an agent of Monsieur, coming to urge his suit to the hand of Elizabeth; thirdly, that he was the Duke of Medina, come over, incognito, to adjust the quarrel betwixt Philip and that Princess.

Tressilian was angry, and expostulated with the artist on the various inconveniences, and, in particular, the unnecessary degree of attention to which they were subjected by the figments he thus circulated; but he was pacified (for who could be proof against such an argument?) by Wayland's assuring him that a general importance was attached to his own (Tressilian's) striking presence, which rendered it necessary to give an extraordinary reason for the rapidity and secrecy of his journey.

At length they approached the metropolis, where, owing to the more general recourse of strangers, their

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appearance excited neither observation nor inquiry, and finally they entered London itself.

It was Tressilian's purpose to go down directly to Deptford, where Lord Sussex resided, in order to be near the court, then held at Greenwich, the favourite residence of Elizabeth, and honoured as her birth-place. Still a brief halt in London was necessary; and it was somewhat prolonged by the earnest entreaties of Wayland Smith, who desired permission to take a walk through the city.

"Take thy sword and buckler, and follow me, then," said Tressilian; "I am about to walk myself, and we will go in company."

This he said, because he was not altogether so secure of the fidelity of his new retainer, as to lose sight of him at this interesting moment, when rival factions at the court of Elizabeth were running so high. Wayland Smith willingly acquiesced in the precaution, of which he probably conjectured the motive, but only stipulated, that his master should enter the shops of such chemists or apothecaries as he should point out, in walking through Fleet Street, and permit him to make some necessary purchases. Tressilian agreed, and obeying the signal of his attendant, walked successively into more than four or five shops, where he observed that Wayland purchased in each only one single drug, in various quantities. The medicines which he first asked for were readily furnished, each in succession, but those which he afterwards required were less easily supplied—and Tressilian observed, that Wayland more than once, to the surprise of the shopkeeper, returned the gum or herb that was offered to him, and compelled him to exchange it for the right sort, or else went on to seek it elsewhere. But one ingredient, in particular, seemed almost impossible to be found. Some

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chemists plainly admitted they had never seen it,—others denied that such a drug existed, excepting in the imagination of crazy alchemists,—and most of them attempted to satisfy their customer, by producing some substitute, which, when rejected by Wayland, as not being what he had asked for, they maintained possessed, in a superior degree, the self-same qualities. In general, they all displayed some curiosity concerning the purpose for which he wanted it. One old, meagre chemist, to whom the artist put the usual question, in terms which Tressilian neither understood nor could recollect, answered frankly, there was none of that drug in London, unless Yoglan the Jew chanced to have some of it upon hand.

"I thought as much," said Wayland. And as soon as they left the shop, he said to Tressilian, "I crave your pardon, sir, but no artist can work without his tools. I must needs go to this Yoglan's; and I promise you, that if this detains you longer than your leisure seems to permit, you shall, nevertheless, be well repaid, by the use I will make of this rare drug. Permit me," he added, "to walk before you, for we are now to quit the broad street, and we will make double speed if I lead the way."

Tressilian acquiesced, and, following the smith down a lane which turned to the left hand towards the river, he found that his guide walked on with great speed, and apparently perfect knowledge of the town, through a labyrinth of by-streets, courts, and blind alleys, until at length Wayland paused in the midst of a very narrow lane, the termination of which shewed a peep of the Thames looking misty and muddy, which back-ground was crossed saltierwise, as Mr. Mumblazen might have said, by the masts of two lighters that lay waiting for the tide. The shop under which he halted had not, as in modern days,

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a glazed window—but a paltry canvass screen surrounded such a stall as a cobbler now occupies, having the front open, much in the manner of a fishmonger's booth of the present day. A little old smock-faced man, the very reverse of a Jew in complexion, for he was very soft-haired as well as beardless, appeared, and with many courtesies asked Wayland what he pleased to want. He had no sooner named the drug, than the Jew started and looked surprised. "And vat might your worship vant with that drug, which is not named, mein God, in forty years as I have been chemist here?"

"These questions it is no part of my commission to answer," said Wayland; "I only wish to know if you have what I want, and having it, are willing to sell it?"

"Ay, mein God, for having it, that I have, and for selling it, I am a chemist, and sell every drug." So saying, he exhibited a powder, and then continued, "But it will cost much moneys—Vat I ave cost its weight in gold—ay, gold well-refined—I vill say six times—It comes from Mount Sinai, where we had our blessed Law given forth, and the plant blossoms but once in one hundred year."

"I do not know how often it is gathered on Mount Sinai," said Wayland, after looking at the drug offered him with great disdain, "but I will wager my sword and buckler against your gaberdine, that this trash you offer me, instead of what I asked for, may be had for gathering any day of the week in the castle ditch of Aleppo."

"You are a rude man," said the Jew; "and, besides, I ave no better than that—or if I ave, I will not sell it without order of a physician—or without you tell me vat you make of it."

The artist made brief answer in a language of which Tressilian could not understand a word, and which seemed

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to strike the Jew with the utmost astonishment. He stared upon Wayland like one who has suddenly recognised some mighty hero or dreaded potentate, in the person of an unknown and unmarked stranger. "Holy Elias!" he exclaimed, when he had recovered the first stunning effects of his surprise; and then passing from his former suspicious and surly manner to the very extremity of obsequiousness, he cringed low to the artist, and besought him to enter his poor house, to bless his miserable threshold by crossing it.

"Vill you not taste a cup vith the poor Jew, Zacharias Yoglan?—Vill you Tokay ave?—vill you Lachrymæ taste?—vill you——"

"You offend in your proffers," said Wayland; "minister to me in what I require of you, and forbear further discourse."

The rebuked Israelite took his bunch of keys, and opening with circumspection a cabinet which seemed more strongly secured than the other cases of drugs and medicines amongst which it stood, he drew out a little secret drawer, having a glass lid, and containing a small portion of a black powder. This he offered to Wayland, his manner conveying the deepest devotion towards him, though an avaricious and jealous expression, which seemed to grudge every grain of which his customer was about to possess himself, disputed ground in his countenance, with the obsequious deference which he desired it should exhibit.

"Have you scales?" said Wayland.

The Jew pointed to those which lay ready for common use in the shop, but he did so with a puzzled expression of doubt and fear, which did not escape the artist.

"They must be other than these," said Wayland,

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sternly; "know you not that holy things lose their virtue if weighed in an unjust balance?"

The Jew hung his head, took from a steel-plated casket a pair of scales beautifully mounted, and said, as he adjusted them for the artist's use,—"With these I do mine own experiment—one hair of the high-priest's beard would turn them."

"It suffices," said the artist; and weighed out two drachms for himself of the black powder, which he very carefully folded up and put into his pouch with the other drugs. He then demanded the price of the Jew, who answered, shaking his head and bowing,—

"No price—no, nothing at all from such as you.—But you will see the poor Jew again? you will look into his laboratory, where, God help him, he hath dried himself to the substance of the withered gourd of Jonah the holy prophet—You vill ave pity on him, and shew him one little step on the great road?"

"Hush!" said Wayland, laying his finger mysteriously on his mouth, "it may be we shall meet again—thou hast already the *Schahmajm*, as thine own Rabbis call it—the general creation; watch, therefore, and pray, for thou must attain the knowledge of Alchahest Elixir, Samech, ere I may commune farther with thee." Then returning with a slight nod the reverential congees of the Jew, he walked gravely up the lane, followed by his master, whose first observation on the scene he had just witnessed was, that Wayland ought to have paid the man for his drug, whatever it was.

"I pay him?" said the artist; "may the foul fiend pay me if I do!—Had it not been that I thought it might displease your worship, I would have had an ounce or two of gold out of him, in exchange for the same just weight of brick-dust."

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"I advise you to practise no such knavery while waiting upon me," said Tressilian.

"Did I not say," answered the artist, "that for that reason alone, I forbore him for the present?—Knavery, call you it?—why, yonder wretched skeleton hath wealth sufficient to pave the whole lane he lives in with dollars, and scarce miss them out of his own iron chest; yet he goes mad after the philosopher's stone—and besides, he would have cheated a poor serving-man, as he thought me at first, with trash that was not worth a penny—Match for match, quoth the devil to the collier; if his false medicine was worth my good crowns, my true brick-dust is as well worth his good gold."

"It may be so for aught I know," said Tressilian, "in dealing amongst Jews and apothecaries; but understand, that to have such tricks of legerdemain practised by one attending on me, diminishes my honour, and that I will not permit them. I trust thou hast made up thy purchases?"

"I have, sir," replied Wayland, "and with these drugs will I, this very day, compound the true orvietan, that noble medicine which is so seldom found genuine and effective within these realms of Europe, for want of that most rare and precious drug which I got but now from Yoglan." *

"But why not have made all your purchases at one shop?" said his master; "we have lost nearly an hour in running from one pounder of simples to another."

"Content you, sir," said Wayland. "No man shall

* Orvietan, or Venice treacle, as it was sometimes called, was understood to be a sovereign remedy against poison; and the reader must be contented, for the time he peruses these pages, to hold the same opinion which was once universally received by the learned as well as the vulgar.

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learn my secret; and it would not be mine long, were I to buy all my materials from one chemist."

They now returned to their inn, (the famous Bell-Savage,) and while the Lord Sussex's servant prepared the horses for their journey, Wayland, obtaining from the cook the service of a mortar, shut himself up in a private chamber, where he mixed, pounded, and amalgamated the drugs which he had bought, each in its due proportion, with a readiness and address that plainly shewed him well practised in all the manual operations of pharmacy.

By the time Wayland's electuary was prepared the horses were ready, and a short hour's riding brought them to the present habitation of Lord Sussex, an ancient house, called Say's Court, near Deptford, which had long pertained to a family of that name, but had, for upwards of a century, been possessed by the ancient and honourable family of Evelyn. The present representative of that ancient house took a deep interest in the Earl of Sussex, and had willingly accommodated both him and his numerous retinue in his hospitable mansion. Say's Court was afterwards the residence of the celebrated Mr. Evelyn, whose "Silva" is still the manual of British planters, and whose life, manners, and principles, as illustrated in his Memoirs, ought equally to be the manual of English gentlemen.

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CHAPTER XIV.

> This is rare news thou tell'st me, my good fellow;
> There are two bulls fierce battling on the green
> For one fair heifer—if the one goes down,
> The dale will be more peaceful, and the herd,
> Which have small interest in their bruisement,
> May pasture there in peace.
>
> OLD PLAY.

SAY'S COURT was watched like a beleaguered fort; and so high rose the suspicions of the time, that Tressilian and his attendants were stopped and questioned repeatedly by sentinels, both on foot and horseback, as they approached the abode of the sick Earl. In truth, the high rank which Sussex held in Queen Elizabeth's favour, and his known and avowed rivalry of the Earl of Leicester, caused the utmost importance to be attached to his welfare; for, at the period we treat of, all men doubted whether he or the Earl of Leicester might ultimately have the higher rank in her regard.

Elizabeth, like many of her sex, was fond of governing by factions, so as to balance two opposing interests, and reserve in her own hand the power of making either predominate, as the interest of the state, or perhaps as her own female caprice, (for to that foible even she was not superior,) might finally determine. To finesse—to hold the cards—to oppose one interest to another—to bridle him who thought himself highest in her esteem, by the fears he must entertain of another equally trusted, if not

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equally beloved, were arts which she used throughout her reign, and which enabled her, though frequently giving way to the weakness of favouritism, to prevent most of its evil effects on her kingdom and government.

The two nobles who at present stood as rivals in her favour, possessed very different pretensions to share it; yet it might be in general said, that the Earl of Sussex had been most serviceable to the Queen, while Leicester was most dear to the woman. Sussex was, according to the phrase of the times, a martialist; had done good service in Ireland and in Scotland, and especially in the great northern rebellion in 1569, which was quelled, in a great measure, by his military talents. He was, therefore, naturally surrounded and looked up to by those who wished to make arms their road to distinction. The Earl of Sussex, moreover, was of more ancient and honourable descent than his rival, uniting in his person the representation of the Fitz-Walters, as well as of the Ratcliffes, while the scutcheon of Leicester was stained by the degradation of his grandfather, the oppressive minister of Henry VII., and scarce improved by that of his father, the unhappy Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, executed on Tower-Hill, August 22, 1553. But in person, features, and address, weapons so formidable in the court of a female sovereign, Leicester had advantages more than sufficient to counterbalance the military services, high blood, and frank bearing of the Earl of Sussex; and he bore in the eye of the court and kingdom, the higher share in Elizabeth's favour, though (for such was her uniform policy) by no means so decidedly expressed as to warrant him against the final preponderance of his rival's pretensions. The illness of Sussex, therefore, happened so opportunely for Leicester, as to give rise to

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strange surmises among the public; while the followers of the one Earl were filled with the deepest apprehensions, and those of the other with the highest hopes of its probable issue. Meanwhile,—for in that old time men never forgot the probability that the matter might be determined by length of sword,—the retainers of each noble flocked around their patron, appeared well armed in the vicinity of the court itself, and disturbed the ear of the sovereign by their frequent and alarming debates, held even within the precincts of her palace. This preliminary statement is necessary, to render what follows intelligible to the reader.*

On Tressilian's arrival at Say's Court, he found the place filled with the retainers of the Earl of Sussex, and of the gentlemen who came to attend their patron in his illness. Arms were in every hand, and a deep gloom on every countenance, as if they had apprehended an immediate and violent assault from the opposite faction. In the hall, however, to which Tressilian was ushered by one of the Earl's attendants, while another went to inform Sussex of his arrival, he found only two gentlemen in waiting. There was a remarkable contrast in their dress, appearance, and manners. The attire of the elder gentleman, a person as it seemed of quality, and in the prime of life, was very plain and soldier-like, his stature low, his limbs stout, his bearing ungraceful, and his features of that kind which express sound common sense, without a grain of vivacity or imagination. The younger, who

* Naunton gives us numerous and curious particulars of the jealous struggle which took place between Ratcliffe, Earl of Sussex, and the rising favourite Leicester. The former, when on his death-bed, predicted to his followers, that, after his death, the gipsy (so he called Leicester, from his dark complexion) would prove too many for them.

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seemed about twenty or upwards, was clad in the gayest habit used by persons of quality at the period, wearing a crimson velvet cloak richly ornamented with lace and embroidery, with a bonnet of the same, encircled with a gold chain turned three times round it, and secured by a medal. His hair was adjusted very nearly like that of some fine gentlemen of our own time, that is, it was combed upwards and made to stand as it were on end; and in his ears he wore a pair of silver ear-rings, having each a pearl of considerable size. The countenance of this youth, besides being regularly handsome, and accompanied by a fine person, was animated and striking in a degree that seemed to speak at once the firmness of a decided, and the fire of an enterprising character, the power of reflection, and the promptitude of determination.

Both these gentlemen reclined nearly in the same posture on benches near each other; but each seeming engaged in his own meditations, looked straight upon the wall which was opposite to them without speaking to his companion. The looks of the elder were of that sort which convinced the beholder, that, in looking on the wall, he saw no more than the side of an old hall hung around with cloaks, antlers, bucklers, old pieces of armour, partisans, and the similar articles which were usually the furniture of such a place. The look of the younger gallant had in it something imaginative; he was sunk in reverie, and it seemed as if the empty space of air betwixt him and the wall were the stage of a theatre on which his fancy was mustering his own *dramatis personæ*, and treating him with sights far different from those which his awakened and earthly vision could have offered.

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At the entrance of Tressilian both started from their musing, and bade him welcome; the younger, in particular, with great appearance of animation and cordiality.

"Thou art welcome, Tressilian," said the youth; "thy philosophy stole thee from us when this household had objects of ambition to offer—it is an honest philosophy, since it returns thee to us when there are only dangers to be shared."

"Is my lord, then, so dangerously indisposed?" said Tressilian.

"We fear the very worst," answered the elder gentleman, "and by the worst practice."

"Fie," replied Tressilian, "my Lord of Leicester is honourable."

"What doth he with such attendants, then, as he hath about him?" said the younger gallant. "The man who raises the devil may be honest, but he is answerable for the mischief which the fiend does, for all that."

"And is this all that are of you, my mates," said Tressilian, "that are about my lord in his utmost straits?"

"No, no," replied the elder gentleman, "there are Tracy, Markham, and several more; but we keep watch here by two at once, and some are weary and are sleeping in the gallery above."

"And some," said the young man, "are gone down to the Dock yonder at Deptford, to look out such a hulk as they may purchase by clubbing their broken fortunes; and so soon as all is over, we will lay our noble lord in a noble green grave, have a blow at those who have hurried him thither, if opportunity suits, and then sail for the Indies, with heavy hearts and light purses."

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"It may be," said Tressilian, "that I will embrace the same purpose, so soon as I have settled some business at court."

"Thou business at court!" they both exclaimed at once; "and thou make the Indian voyage!"

"Why, Tressilian," said the younger man, "art thou not wedded, and beyond these flaws of fortune, that drive folks out to sea when their bark bears fairest for the haven?—What has become of the lovely Indamira that was to match my Amoret for truth and beauty?"

"Speak not of her!" said Tressilian, averting his face.

"Ay, stands it so with you?" said the youth, taking his hand very affectionately; "then, fear not I will again touch the green wound—But it is strange as well as sad news. Are none of our fair and merry fellowship to escape shipwreck of fortune and happiness in this sudden tempest? I had hoped thou wert in harbour, at least, my dear Edmund—But truly says another dear friend of thy name,

> 'What man that sees the ever whirling wheel
> Of Chance, the which all mortal things doth sway;
> But that thereby doth find and plainly feel,
> How Mutability in them doth play
> Her cruel sports to many men's decay.'"

The elder gentleman had risen from his bench, and was pacing the hall with some impatience, while the youth, with much earnestness and feeling, recited these lines. When he had done, the other wrapped himself in his cloak, and again stretched himself down, saying, "I marvel, Tressilian, you will feed the lad in this silly humour. If there were aught to draw a judgment upon a virtuous and honourable household like my lord's, re-

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nounce me if I think not it were this piping, whining, childish trick of poetry, that came among us with Master Walter Wittypate here and his comrades, twisting intc all manner of uncouth and incomprehensible forms of speech, the honest plain English phrase which God gave us to express our meaning withal."

"Blount believes," said his comrade, laughing, "the devil woo'd Eve in rhyme, and that the mystic meaning of the Tree of Knowledge refers solely to the art of clashing rhymes and meting out hexameters." *

At this moment the Earl's chamberlain entered, and informed Tressilian that his lord required to speak with him.

He found Lord Sussex dressed, but unbraced and lying on his couch, and was shocked at the alteration disease

* Among the attendants and adherents of Sussex, we have ventured to introduce the celebrated Raleigh, in the dawn of his court favour.

In Aubrey's Correspondence there are some curious particulars of Sir Walter Raleigh. "He was a tall, handsome, bold man; but his nævе was that he was damnably proud. Old Sir Robert Harley of Brampton Brian Castle, who knew him, would say, it was a great question who was the proudest, Sir Walter, or Sir Thomas Overbury; but the difference that was, was judged in Sir Thomas's side. In the great parlour at Downton, at Mr. Raleigh's, is a good piece, an original of Sir Walter, in a white satin doublet, all embroidered with rich pearls, and a mighty rich chain of great pearls about his neck. The old servants have told me that the pearls were near as big as the painted ones. He had a most remarkable aspect, an exceeding high forehead, long-faced and sour-eye lidded." A rebus is added to this purpose:

> The enemy to the stomach and the word of disgrace,
> Is the name of the gentleman with the bold face.

Sir Walter Raleigh's beard turned up naturally, which gave him an advantage over the gallants of the time, whose mustaches received a touch of the barber's art to give them the air then most admired.—See AUBREY'S *Correspondence*, vol. ii. part ii. p. 500.

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had made in his person. The Earl received him with the most friendly cordiality, and inquired into the state of his courtship. Tressilian evaded his inquiries for a moment, and turning his discourse on the Earl's own health, he discovered, to his surprise, that the symptoms of his disorder corresponded minutely with those which Wayland had predicated concerning it. He hesitated not, therefore, to communicate to Sussex the whole history of his attendant, and the pretensions he set up to cure the disorder under which he laboured. The Earl listened with incredulous attention until the name of Demetrius was mentioned, and then suddenly called to his secretary to bring him a certain casket which contained papers of importance. "Take out from thence," he said, "the declaration of the rascal cook whom we had under examination, and look heedfully if the name of Demetrius be not there mentioned."

The secretary turned to the passage at once, and read, "And said declarant being examined, saith, That he remembers having made the sauce to the said sturgeon-fish, after eating of which, the said noble Lord was taken ill; and he put the usual ingredients and condiments therein, namely——"

"Pass over his trash," said the Earl, "and see whether he had not been supplied with his materials by a herbalist called Demetrius."

"It is even so," answered the secretary. "And he adds, he has not since seen the said Demetrius."

"This accords with thy fellow's story, Tressilian," said the Earl; "call him hither."

On being summoned to the Earl's presence, Wayland Smith told his former tale with firmness and consistency.

"It may be," said the Earl, "thou art sent by those

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who have begun this work, to end it for them; but bethink, if I miscarry under thy medicine, it may go hard with thee."

"That were severe measure," said Wayland, "since the issue of medicine, and the end of life, are in God's disposal. But I will stand the risk. I have not lived so long under ground, to be afraid of a grave."

"Nay, if thou be'st so confident," said the Earl of Sussex, "I will take the risk too, for the learned can do nothing for me. Tell me how this medicine is to be taken?"

"That will I do presently," said Wayland; "but allow me to condition that, since I incur all the risk of this treatment, no other physician shall be permitted to interfere with it."

"That is but fair," replied the Earl; "and now prepare your drug."

While Wayland obeyed the Earl's commands, his servants, by the artist's direction, undressed their master, and placed him in bed.

"I warn you," he said, "that the first operation of this medicine will be to produce a heavy sleep, during which time the chamber must be kept undisturbed; as the consequences may otherwise be fatal. I myself will watch by the Earl, with any of the gentlemen of his chamber."

"Let all leave the room, save Stanley and this good fellow," said the Earl.

"And saving me also," said Tressilian. "I too, am deeply interested in the effects of this potion."

"Be it so, good friend," said the Earl; "and now for our experiment; but first call my secretary and chamberlain."

"Bear witness," he continued, when these officers

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arrived, "bear witness for me, gentlemen, that our honourable friend Tressilian is in no way responsible for the effects which this medicine may produce upon me, the taking it being my own free action and choice, in regard I believe it to be a remedy which God has furnished me by unexpected means, to recover me of my present malady. Commend me to my noble and princely Mistress; and say that I live and die her true servant, and wish to all about her throne the same singleness of heart and will to serve her, with more ability to do so than hath been assigned to poor Thomas Ratcliffe."

He then folded his hands, and seemed for a second or two absorbed in mental devotion, then took the potion in his hand, and, pausing, regarded Wayland with a look that seemed designed to penetrate his very soul, but which caused no anxiety or hesitation in the countenance or manner of the artist.

"Here is nothing to be feared," said Sussex to Tressilian; and swallowed the medicine without farther hesitation.

"I am now to pray your lordship," said Wayland, "to dispose yourself to rest as commodiously as you can; and of you, gentlemen, to remain as still and mute as if you waited at your mother's death-bed."

The chamberlain and secretary then withdrew, giving orders that all doors be bolted, and all noise in the house strictly prohibited. Several gentlemen were voluntary watchers in the hall, but none remained in the chamber of the sick Earl, save his groom of the chamber Stanley, the artist, and Tressilian.—Wayland Smith's predictions were speedily accomplished, and a sleep fell upon the Earl, so deep and sound, that they who watched his bedside began to fear, that, in his weakened state, he might

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pass away without awakening from his lethargy. Wayland Smith himself appeared anxious, and felt the temples of the Earl slightly, from time to time, attending particularly to the state of respiration, which was full and deep, but at the same time easy and uninterrupted.

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CHAPTER XV.

> You loggerheaded and unpolish'd grooms,
> What, no attendance, no regard, no duty?
> Where is the foolish knave I sent before?
>
> TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THERE is no period at which men look worse in the eyes of each other, or feel more uncomfortable, than when the first dawn of daylight finds them watchers. Even a beauty of the first order, after the vigils of a ball are interrupted by the dawn, would do wisely to withdraw herself from the gaze of her fondest and most partial admirers. Such was the pale, inauspicious, and ungrateful light, which began to beam upon those who kept watch all night, in the hall at Say's Court, and which mingled its cold, pale, blue diffusion with the red, yellow, and smoky beams of expiring lamps and torches. The young gallant, whom we noticed in our last chapter, had left the room for a few minutes, to learn the cause of a knocking at the outward gate, and on his return, was so struck with the forlorn and ghastly aspects of his companions of the watch, that he exclaimed, "Pity of my heart, my masters, how like owls you look! Methinks, when the sun rises, I shall see you flutter off with your eyes dazzled, to stick yourselves into the next ivy-tod or ruined steeple."

"Hold thy peace, thou gibing fool," said Blount; "hold

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thy peace. Is this a time for jeering, when the manhood of England is perchance dying within a wall's breadth of thee?"

"There thou liest," replied the gallant.

"How, lie!" exclaimed Blount, starting up, "lie, and to me?"

"Why, so thou didst, thou peevish fool," answered the youth; "thou didst lie on that bench even now didst thou not? But art thou not a hasty coxcomb, to pick up a wry word so wrathfully? Nevertheless, loving and honouring my lord as truly as thou, or any one, I do say, that should Heaven take him from us, all England's manhood dies not with him."

"Ay," replied Blount, "a good portion will survive with thee, doubtless."

"And a good portion with thyself, Blount, and with stout Markham here, and Tracy, and all of us. But I am he will best employ the talent heaven has given to us all."

"As how, I prithee?" said Blount, "tell us your mystery of multiplying."

"Why, sirs," answered the youth, "ye are like goodly land, which bears no crop because it is not quickened by manure; but I have that rising spirit in me, which will make my poor faculties labour to keep pace with it. My ambition will keep my brain at work, I warrant thee."

"I pray to God it does not drive thee mad," said Blount; "for my part, if we lose our noble lord, I bid adieu to the court and to the camp both. I have five hundred foul acres in Norfolk, and thither will I, and change the court pantoufle for the country hobnail."

"Oh base transmutation!" exclaimed his antagonist;

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"thou hast already got the true rustic slouch—thy shoulders stoop, as if thine hands were at the stilts of the plough, and thou hast a kind of earthy smell about thee, instead of being perfumed with essence, as a gallant and courtier should. On my soul thou hast stolen out to roll thyself on a hay mow! Thy only excuse will be to swear by thy hilts, that the farmer had a fair daughter."

"I pray thee, Walter," said another of the company, "cease thy raillery, which suits neither time nor place, and tell us who was at the gate just now."

"Doctor Masters, physician to her Grace in ordinary, sent by her especial orders to inquire after the Earl's health," answered Walter.

"Ha! what!" exclaimed Tracy, "that was no slight mark of favour; if the Earl can but come through, he will match with Leicester yet. Is Masters with my lord at present?"

"Nay," replied Walter, "he is half way back to Greenwich by this time, and in high dudgeon."

"Thou didst not refuse him admittance?" exclaimed Tracy.

"Thou wert not surely so mad?" ejaculated Blount.

"I refused him admittance as flatly, Blount, as you would refuse a penny to a blind beggar; as obstinately, Tracy, as thou didst ever deny access to a dun."

"Why, in the fiend's name, didst thou trust him to go to the gate?" said Blount to Tracy.

"It suited his years better than mine," answered Tracy; "but he has undone us all now thoroughly. My lord may live or die, he will never have a look of favour from her Majesty again."

"Nor the means of making fortunes for his followers," said the young gallant, smiling contemptuously;—"there

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lies the sore point, that will brook no handling. My good sirs, I sounded my lamentations over my lord somewhat less loudly than some of you; but when the point comes of doing him service, I will yield to none of you. Had this learned leech entered, think'st thou not there had been such a coil betwixt him and Tressilian's mediciner, that not the sleeper only, but the very dead might have awakened? I know what larum belongs to the discord of doctors."

"And who is to take the blame of opposing the Queen's orders?" said Tracy; "for undeniably, Doctor Masters came with her Grace's positive commands to cure the Earl."

"I, who have done the wrong, will bear the blame," said Walter.

"Thus, then, off fly the dreams of court favour thou hast nourished," said Blount; "and despite all thy boasted art and ambition, Devonshire will see thee shine a true younger brother, fit to sit low at the board, carve turn about with the chaplain, look that the hounds be fed, and see the squire's girths drawn when he goes a-hunting."

"Not so," said the young man, colouring, "not while Ireland and the Netherlands have wars, and not while the sea hath pathless waves. The rich west hath lands undreamed of, and Britain contains bold hearts to venture on the quest of them.—Adieu for a space, my masters. I go to walk in the court and look to the sentinels."

"The lad hath quicksilver in his veins, that is certain," said Blount, looking at Markham.

"He hath that both in brain and blood," said Markham, "which may either make or mar him. But, in closing the door against Masters, he hath done a daring and loving piece of service; for Tressilian's fellow hath

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ever averred, that to wake the Earl were death, and Masters would wake the Seven Sleepers themselves, if he thought they slept not by the regular ordinance of medicine."

Morning was well advanced, when Tressilian, fatigued and over-watched, came down to the hall with the joyful intelligence, that the Earl had awakened of himself, that he found his internal complaints much mitigated, and spoke with a cheerfulness, and looked round with a vivacity, which of themselves shewed a material and favourable change had taken place. Tressilian at the same time commanded the attendance of one or two of his followers, to report what had passed during the night, and to relieve the watchers in the Earl's chamber.

When the message of the Queen was communicated to the Earl of Sussex, he at first smiled at the repulse which the physician had received from his zealous young follower, but instantly recollecting himself, he commanded Blount, his master of the horse, instantly to take boat, and go down the river to the Palace of Greenwich, taking young Walter and Tracy with him, and make a suitable compliment, expressing his grateful thanks to his Sovereign, and mentioning the cause why he had not been enabled to profit by the assistance of the wise and learned Doctor Masters.

"A plague on it," said Blount, as he descended the stairs, "had he sent me with a cartel to Leicester, I think I should have done his errand indifferently well. But to go to our gracious Sovereign, before whom all words must be lackered over either with gilding or with sugar, is such a confectionary matter as clean baffles my poor old English brain.—Come with me, Tracy, and come you too, Master Walter Wittypate, that art the cause of our

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having all this ado. Let us see if thy neat brain, that frames so many flashy fireworks, can help out a plain fellow at need with some of thy shrewd devices."

"Never fear, never fear," exclaimed the youth, "it is I will help you through—let me but fetch my cloak."

"Why, thou hast it on thy shoulders," said Blount,—"the lad is mazed."

"No, this is Tracy's old mantle," answered Walter; "I go not with thee to court unless as a gentleman should."

"Why," said Blount, "thy braveries are like to dazzle the eyes of none but some poor groom or porter."

"I know that," said the youth; "but I am resolved I will have my own cloak, ay, and brush my doublet to boot, ere I stir forth with you."

"Well, well," said Blount, "here is a coil about a doublet and a cloak—get thyself ready, a God's name!"

They were soon launched on the princely bosom of the broad Thames, upon which the sun now shone forth in all its splendour.

"There are two things scarce matched in the universe," said Walter to Blount—"the sun in heaven, and the Thames on the earth."

"The one will light us to Greenwich well enough," said Blount, "and the other would take us there a little faster, if it were ebb tide."

"And this is all thou think'st—all thou carest—all thou deem'st the use of the King of Elements, and the King of Rivers, to guide three such poor caitiffs, as thyself, and me, and Tracy, upon an idle journey of courtly ceremony!"

"It is no errand of my seeking, faith," replied Blount, "and I could excuse both the sun and the Thames the

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trouble of carrying me where I have no great mind to go, and where I expect but dog's wages for my trouble—and by my honour," he added, looking out from the head of the boat, "it seems to me as if our message were a sort of labour in vain; for see, the Queen's barge lies at the stairs, as if her Majesty were about to take water."

It was even so. The royal barge, manned with the Queen's watermen, richly attired in the regal liveries, and having the banner of England displayed, did indeed lie at the great stairs which ascended from the river, and along with it two or three other boats for transporting such part of her retinue as were not in immediate attendance on the royal person. The yeomen of the guard, the tallest and most handsome men whom England could produce, guarded with their halberds the passage from the palace-gate to the river side, and all seemed in readiness for the Queen's coming forth, although the day was yet so early.

"By my faith, this bodes us no good," said Blount; "it must be some perilous cause puts her Grace in motion thus untimeously. By my counsel, we were best put back again, and tell the Earl what we have seen."

"Tell the Earl what we have seen!" said Walter, "why, what have we seen but a boat, and men with scarlet jerkins, and halberds in their hands? Let us do his errand, and tell him what the Queen says in reply."

So saying, he caused the boat to be pulled towards a landing-place at some distance from the principal one, which it would not, at that moment, have been thought respectful to approach, and jumped on shore, followed, though with reluctance, by his cautious and timid companions. As they approached the gate of the palace, one of the sergeant porters told them they could not at

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present enter, as her Majesty was in the act of coming forth. The gentlemen used the name of the Earl of Sussex; but it proved no charm to subdue the officer, who alleged in reply, that it was as much as his post was worth, to disobey in the least tittle the commands which he had received.

"Nay, I told you as much before," said Blount; "do, I pray you, my dear Walter, let us take boat and return."

"Not till I see the Queen come forth," returned the youth, composedly.

"Thou art mad, stark mad, by the mass!" answered Blount.

"And thou," said Walter, "art turned coward of the sudden. I have seen thee face half a score of shag-headed Irish kernes to thy own share of them, and now thou wouldst blink and go back to shun the frown of a fair lady!"

At this moment the gates opened, and ushers began to issue forth in array, preceded and flanked by the band of Gentlemen Pensioners. After this, amid a crowd of lords and ladies, yet so disposed around her that she could see and be seen on all sides, came Elizabeth herself, then in the prime of womanhood, and in the full glow of what in a Sovereign was called beauty, and who would in the lowest rank of life have been truly judged a noble figure, joined to a striking and commanding physiognomy. She leant on the arm of Lord Hunsdon, whose relation to her by her mother's side often procured him such distinguished marks of Elizabeth's intimacy.

The young cavalier we have so often mentioned had probably never yet approached so near the person of his Sovereign, and he pressed forward as far as the line of warders permitted, in order to avail himself of the present

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opportunity. His companion, on the contrary, cursing his imprudence, kept pulling him backwards, till Walter shook him off impatiently, and letting his rich cloak drop carelessly from one shoulder; a natural action, which served, however, to display to the best advantage his well-proportioned person. Unbonneting at the same time, he fixed his eager gaze on the Queen's approach, with a mixture of respectful curiosity, and modest yet ardent admiration, which suited so well with his fine features, that the warders, struck with his rich attire and noble countenance, suffered him to approach the ground over which the Queen was to pass, somewhat closer than was permitted to ordinary spectators. Thus the adventurous youth stood full in Elizabeth's eye—an eye never indifferent to the admiration which she deservedly excited among her subjects, or to the fair proportions of external form which chanced to distinguish any of her courtiers. Accordingly, she fixed her keen glance on the youth, as she approached the place where he stood, with a look in which surprise at his boldness seemed to be unmingled with resentment, while a trifling accident happened which attracted her attention towards him yet more strongly. The night had been rainy, and just where the young gentleman stood, a small quantity of mud interrupted the Queen's passage. As she hesitated to pass on, the gallant, throwing his cloak from his shoulders, laid it on the miry spot, so as to ensure her stepping over it dry-shod. Elizabeth looked at the young man, who accompanied this act of devoted courtesy with a profound reverence and a blush that overspread his whole countenance. The Queen was confused, and blushed in her turn, nodded her head, hastily passed on, and embarked in her barge without saying a word.

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"Come along, Sir Coxcomb," said Blount; "your gay cloak will need the brush to-day, I wot. Nay, if you had meant to make a foot-cloth of your mantle, better have kept Tracy's old drap-de-bure, which despises all colours."

"This cloak," said the youth, taking it up and folding it, "shall never be brushed while in my possession."

"And that will not be long, if you learn not a little more economy—we shall have you in *cuerpo* soon, as the Spaniard says."

Their discourse was here interrupted by one of the Band of Pensioners.

"I was sent," said he, after looking at them attentively, "to a gentleman who hath no cloak, or a muddy one.—You, sir, I think," addressing the younger cavalier, "are the man; you will please to follow me."

"He is in attendance on me," said Blount, "on me, the noble Earl of Sussex's master of horse."

"I have nothing to say to that," answered the messenger; "my orders are directly from her Majesty, and concern this gentleman only."

So saying, he walked away, followed by Walter, leaving the others behind, Blount's eyes almost starting from his head with the excess of his astonishment. At length he gave vent to it in an exclamation—"Who the good jere would have thought this!" And shaking his head with a mysterious air, he walked to his own boat, embarked, and returned to Deptford.

The young cavalier was, in the meanwhile, guided to the water-side by the Pensioner, who shewed him considerable respect; a circumstance which, to persons in his situation, may be considered as an augury of no small consequence. He ushered him into one of the wherries which lay ready to attend the Queen's barge, which was

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already proceeding up the river, with the advantage of that flood-tide, of which, in the course of their descent, Blount had complained to his associates.

The two rowers used their oars with such expedition at the signal of the Gentleman Pensioner, that they very soon brought their little skiff under the stern of the Queen's boat, where she sate beneath an awning, attended by two or three ladies, and the nobles of her household. She looked more than once at the wherry in which the young adventurer was seated, spoke to those around her, and seemed to laugh. At length one of the attendants, by the Queen's order apparently, made a sign for the wherry to come alongside, and the young man was desired to step from his own skiff into the Queen's barge, which he performed with graceful agility at the fore part of the boat, and was brought aft to the Queen's presence, the wherry at the same time dropping into the rear. The youth underwent the gaze of Majesty, not the less gracefully that his self-possession was mingled with embarrassment. The muddied cloak still hung upon his arm, and formed the natural topic with which the Queen introduced the conversation.

"You have this day spoiled a gay mantle in our service, young man. We thank you for your service, though the manner of offering it was unusual, and something bold."

"In a sovereign's need," answered the youth, "it is each liegeman's duty to be bold."

"God's pity! that was well said, my lord," said the Queen, turning to a grave person who sate by her, and answered with a grave inclination of the head, and something of a mumbled assent. "Well, young man, your gallantry shall not go unrewarded. Go to the wardrobe keeper, and he shall have orders to supply the suit which

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you have cast away in our service. Thou shalt have a suit, and that of the newest cut, I promise thee, on the word of a princess."

"May it please your grace," said Walter, hesitating, "it is not for so humble a servant of your Majesty to measure out your bounties; but if it became me to choose——"

"Thou wouldst have gold, I warrant me," said the Queen, interrupting him; "fie, young man! I take shame to say, that, in our capital, such and so various are the means of thriftless folly, that to give gold to youth is giving fuel to fire, and furnishing them with the means of self-destruction. If I live and reign, these means of unchristian excess shall be abridged. Yet thou mayest be poor," she added, "or thy parents may be—It shall be gold, if thou wilt, but thou shalt answer to me for the use on't."

Walter waited patiently until the Queen had done, and then modestly assured her, that gold was still less in his wish than the raiment her Majesty had before offered.

"How, boy!" said the Queen, "neither gold nor garment? What is it thou wouldst have of me then?"

"Only permission, madam—if it is not asking too high an honour—permission to wear the cloak which did you this trifling service."

"Permission to wear thine own cloak, thou silly boy!" said the Queen.

"It is no longer mine," said Walter; "when your Majesty's foot touched it, it became a fit mantle for a prince, but far too rich a one for its former owner."

The Queen again blushed; and endeavoured to cover, by laughing, a slight degree of not unpleasing surprise and confusion.

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"Heard you ever the like, my lords? The youth's head is turned with reading romances—I must know something of him, that I may send him safe to his friends —What art thou?"

"A gentleman of the household of the Earl of Sussex, so please your Grace, sent hither with his Master of Horse, upon a message to your Majesty."

In a moment the gracious expression which Elizabeth's face had hitherto maintained, gave way to an expression of haughtiness and severity.

"My Lord of Sussex," she said, "has taught us how to regard his messages, by the value he places upon ours. We sent but this morning the physician in ordinary of our chamber, and that at no usual time, understanding his lordship's illness to be more dangerous than we had before apprehended. There is at no court in Europe a man more skilled in this holy and most useful science than Doctor Masters, and he came from Us to our subject. Nevertheless, he found the gate of Say's Court defended by men with culverins, as if it had been on the Borders of Scotland, not in the vicinity of our court; and when he demanded admittance in our name, it was stubbornly refused. For this slight of a kindness, which had but too much of condescension in it, we will receive, at present at least, no excuse; and some such we suppose to have been the purport of my Lord of Sussex's message."

This was uttered in a tone, and with a gesture, which made Lord Sussex's friends who were within hearing tremble. He to whom the speech was addressed, however, trembled not; but with great deference and humility, as soon as the Queen's passion gave him an opportunity, he replied:—"So please your most gracious Majesty, I was charged with no apology from the Earl of Sussex."

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"With what were you then charged, sir?" said the Queen, with the impetuosity which, amid nobler qualities, strongly marked her character; "was it with a justification?—or, God's death, with a defiance?"

"Madam," said the young man, "my Lord of Sussex knew the offence approached towards treason, and could think of nothing save of securing the offender, and placing him in your Majesty's hands, and at your mercy. The noble Earl was fast asleep when your most gracious message reached him, a potion having been administered to that purpose by his physician; and his Lordship knew not of the ungracious repulse your Majesty's royal and most comfortable message had received, until after he awoke this morning."

"And which of his domestics, then, in the name of Heaven, presumed to reject my message, without even admitting my own physician to the presence of him whom I sent him to attend?" said the Queen, much surprised.

"The offender, madam, is before you," replied Walter, bowing very low; "the full and sole blame is mine; and my lord has most justly sent me to abye the consequences of a fault, of which he is as innocent as a sleeping man's dreams can be of a waking man's actions."

"What! was it thou?—thou thyself, that repelled my messenger and my physician from Say's Court?" said the Queen. "What could occasion such boldness in one who seems devoted—that is, whose exterior bearing shews devotion—to his Sovereign?"

"Madam," said the youth,—who, notwithstanding an assumed appearance of severity, thought that he saw something in the Queen's face that resembled not implacability,—"We say in our country, that the physician is

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for the time the liege sovereign of his patient. Now, my noble master was then under dominion of a leech, by whose advice he hath greatly profited, who had issued his commands that his patient should not that night be disturbed, on the very peril of his life."

"Thy master hath trusted some false varlet of an empiric," said the Queen.

"I know not, madam, but by the fact that he is now —this very morning—awakened much refreshed and strengthened, from the only sleep he hath had for many hours."

The nobles looked at each other, but more with the purpose to see what each thought of this news, than to exchange any remarks on what had happened. The Queen answered hastily, and without affecting to disguise her satisfaction, "By my word, I am glad he is better. But thou wert over bold to deny the access of my Doctor Masters. Know'st thou not that Holy Writ saith, 'in the multitude of counsel there is safety!'"

"Ay, madam," said Walter, "but I have heard learned men say, that the safety spoken of is for the physicians, not for the patient."

"By my faith, child, thou hast pushed me home," said the Queen, laughing; "for my Hebrew learning does not come quite at a call.—How say you, my Lord of Lincoln? Hath the lad given a just interpretation of the text?"

"The word *safety*, my most gracious madam," said the Bishop of Lincoln, "for so hath been translated, it may be somewhat hastily, the Hebrew word, being——"

"My lord," said the Queen, interrupting him, "we said we had forgotten our Hebrew.—But for thee, young man, what is thy name and birth?"

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"Raleigh is my name, most gracious Queen, the youngest son of a large but honourable family of Devonshire."

"Raleigh?" said Elizabeth, after a moment's recollection, "have we not heard of your service in Ireland?"

"I have been so fortunate as to do some service there, madam," replied Raleigh, "scarce, however, of consequence sufficient to reach your Grace's ears."

"They hear farther than you think of," said the Queen, graciously, "and have heard of a youth who defended a ford in Shannon against a whole band of wild Irish rebels, until the stream ran purple with their blood and his own."

"Some blood I may have lost," said the youth, looking down, "but it was where my best is due; and that is in your Majesty's service."

The Queen paused, and then said, hastily, "You are very young to have fought so well, and to speak so well. But you must not escape your penance for turning back Masters—the poor man hath caught cold on the river; for our order reached him when he was just returned from certain visits in London, and he held it matter of loyalty and conscience instantly to set forth again. So hark ye, Master Raleigh, see thou fail not to wear thy muddy cloak, in token of penitence, till our pleasure be farther known. And here," she added, giving him a jewel of gold, in the form of a chess-man, "I give thee this to wear at the collar."

Raleigh, to whom nature had taught intuitively, as it were, those courtly arts which many scarce acquire from long experience, knelt, and, as he took from her hand the jewel, kissed the fingers which gave it. He knew, per-

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haps, better than almost any of the courtiers who surrounded her, how to mingle the devotion claimed by the Queen, with the gallantry due to her personal beauty—and in this, his first attempt to unite them, he succeeded so well, as at once to gratify Elizabeth's personal vanity, and her love of power.*

His master, the Earl of Sussex, had the full advantage of the satisfaction which Raleigh had afforded Elizabeth, on their first interview.

"My lords and ladies," said the Queen, looking around to the retinue by whom she was attended, "methinks, since we are upon the river, it were well to renounce our present purpose of going to the city, and surprise this poor Earl of Sussex with a visit. He is ill, and suffering doubtless under the fear of our displeasure, from which he hath been honestly cleared by the frank avowal of this malapert boy. What think ye? were it not an act of

* The gallant incident of the cloak is the traditional account of this celebrated statesman's rise at court. None of Elizabeth's courtiers knew better than he how to make his court to her personal vanity, or could more justly estimate the quantity of flattery which she could condescend to swallow. Being confined in the Tower for some offence, and understanding the Queen was about to pass to Greenwich in her barge, he insisted on approaching the window, that he might see, at whatever distance, the Queen of his Affections, the most beautiful object which the earth bore on its surface. The Lieutenant of the Tower (his own particular friend) threw himself between his prisoner and the window; while Sir Walter, apparently influenced by a fit of unrestrainable passion, swore he would not be debarred from seeing his light, his life, his goddess! A scuffle ensued, *got up* for effect's sake, in which the Lieutenant and his captive grappled and struggled with fury—tore each other's hair,—and at length drew daggers, and were only separated by force. The Queen being informed of this scene exhibited by her frantic adorer, it wrought, as was to be expected, much in favour of the captive Paladin. There is little doubt that his quarrel with the Lieutenant was entirely contrived for the purpose which it produced.

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charity to give him such consolation as the thanks of a Queen, much bound to him for his loyal service, may perchance best minister?"

It may be readily supposed, that none to whom this speech was addressed, ventured to oppose its purport.

"Your Grace," said the Bishop of Lincoln, "is the breath of our nostrils." The men of war averred, that the face of the Sovereign was a whetstone to the soldier's sword; while the men of state were not less of opinion, that the light of the Queen's countenance was a lamp to the paths of her councillors; and the ladies agreed, with one voice, that no noble in England so well deserved the regard of England's royal Mistress as the Earl of Sussex—the Earl of Leicester's right being reserved entire; so some of the more politic worded their assent—an exception to which Elizabeth paid no apparent attention. The barge had, therefore, orders to deposit its royal freight at Deptford, at the nearest and most convenient point of communication with Say's Court, in order that the Queen might satisfy her royal and maternal solicitude, by making personal inquiries after the health of the Earl of Sussex.

Raleigh, whose acute spirit foresaw and anticipated important consequences from the most trifling events, hastened to ask the Queen's permission to go in the skiff, and announce the royal visit to his master, ingeniously suggesting, that the joyful surprise might prove prejudicial to his health, since the richest and most generous cordials may sometimes be fatal to those who have been long in a languishing state.

But whether the Queen deemed it too presumptuous in so young a courtier to interpose his opinion unasked, or whether she was moved by a recurrence of the feeling

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of jealousy, which had been instilled into her, by reports that the Earl kept armed men about his person, she desired Raleigh, sharply, to reserve his counsel till it was required of him, and repeated her former orders, to be landed at Deptford, adding, "We will ourselves see what sort of household my Lord of Sussex keeps about him."

"Now the Lord have pity on us!" said the young courtier to himself. "Good hearts, the Earl hath many a one round him; but good heads are scarce with us—and he himself is too ill to give direction. And Blount will be at his morning meal of Yarmouth herrings and ale; and Tracy will have his beastly black puddings and Rhenish;—those thorough-paced Welshmen, Thomas ap Rice and Evan Evans, will be at work on their leek porridge and toasted cheese—and she detests, they say, all coarse meats, evil smells, and strong wines. Could they but think of burning some rosemary in the great hall! but *vogue la galère*, all must now be trusted to chance. Luck hath done indifferent well for me this morning, for I trust I have spoiled a cloak and made a court fortune—May she do as much for my gallant patron!"

The royal barge soon stopped at Deptford, and, amid the loud shouts of the populace, which her presence never failed to excite, the Queen, with a canopy borne over her head, walked, accompanied by her retinue, towards Say's Court, where the distant acclamations of the people gave the first notice of her arrival. Sussex, who was in the act of advising with Tressilian how he should make up the supposed breach in the Queen's favour, was infinitely surprised at learning her immediate approach—not that the Queen's custom of visiting her more distinguished

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nobility, whether in health or sickness, could be unknown to him; but the suddenness of the communication left no time for those preparations with which he well knew Elizabeth loved to be greeted, and the rudeness and confusion of his military household, much increased by his late illness, rendered him altogether unprepared for her reception.

Cursing internally the chance which thus brought her gracious visitation on him unaware, he hastened down with Tressilian, to whose eventful and interesting story he had just given an attentive ear.

"My worthy friend," he said, "such support as I can give your accusation of Varney, you have a right to expect, alike from justice and gratitude. Chance will presently shew whether I can do aught with our Sovereign, or whether, in very deed, my meddling in your affair may not rather prejudice than serve you."

Thus spoke Sussex, while hastily casting around him a loose robe of sables, and adjusting his person in the best manner he could to meet the eye of his Sovereign. But no hurried attention bestowed on his apparel could remove the ghastly effects of long illness on a countenance which nature had marked with features rather strong than pleasing. Besides, he was low of stature, and though broad-shouldered, athletic, and fit for martial achievements, his presence in a peaceful hall was not such as ladies love to look upon; a personal disadvantage, which was supposed to give Sussex, though esteemed and honoured by his Sovereign, considerable disadvantage when compared with Leicester, who was alike remarkable for elegance of manners and for beauty of person.

The Earl's utmost despatch only enabled him to meet

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the Queen as she entered the great hall, and he at once perceived there was a cloud on her brow. Her jealous eye had noticed the martial array of armed gentlemen and retainers with which the mansion-house was filled, and her first words expressed her disapprobation—"Is this a royal garrison, my Lord of Sussex, that it holds so many pikes and calivers? or have we by accident overshot Say's Court, and landed at our Tower of London?"

Lord Sussex hastened to offer some apology.

"It needs not," she said. "My lord, we intend speedily to take up a certain quarrel between your lordship and another great lord of our household, and at the same time to reprehend this uncivilized and dangerous practice of surrounding yourselves with armed, and even with ruffianly followers, as if, in the neighbourhood of our capital, nay, in the very verge of our royal residence, you were preparing to wage civil war with each other. We are glad to see you so well recovered, my lord, though without the assistance of the learned physician whom we sent to you—Urge no excuse—we know how that matter fell out, and we have corrected for it the wild slip, young Raleigh—By the way, my lord, we will speedily relieve your household of him, and take him into our own. Something there is about him which merits to be better nurtured than he is like to be amongst your very military followers."

To this proposal Sussex, though scarce understanding how the Queen came to make it, could only bow and express his acquiescence. He then entreated her to remain till refreshment could be offered; but in this he could not prevail. And, after a few compliments of a much colder and more commonplace character than

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might have been expected from a step so decidedly favourable as a personal visit, the Queen took her leave of Say's Court, having brought confusion thither along with her, and leaving doubt and apprehension behind.

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CHAPTER XVI.

> Then call them to our presence. Face to face,
> And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
> The accuser and accused freely speak;—
> High-stomach'd are they both and full of ire,
> In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.
>
> RICHARD II.

"I AM ordered to attend court to-morrow," said Leicester, speaking to Varney, "to meet, as they surmise, my Lord of Sussex. The Queen intends to take up matters betwixt us. This comes of her visit to Say's Court, of which you must needs speak so lightly."

"I maintain it was nothing," said Varney; "nay, I know from a sure intelligencer, who was within ear-shot of much that was said, that Sussex has lost rather than gained by that visit. The Queen said, when she stepped into the boat, that Say's Court looked like a guard-house, and smelt like an hospital. 'Like a cook's shop in Ram's Alley, rather,' said the Countess of Rutland, who is ever your lordship's good friend. And then my Lord of Lincoln must needs put in his holy oar, and say, that my Lord of Sussex must be excused for his rude and old-world housekeeping, since he had as yet no wife."

"And what said the Queen?" asked Leicester, hastily.

"She took him up roundly," said Varney, "and asked what my Lord Sussex had to do with a wife, or my Lord Bishop to speak on such a subject. If

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marriage is permitted, she said, I no where read that it is enjoined."

"She likes not marriages, or speech of marriage, among churchmen," said Leicester.

"Nor among courtiers neither," said Varney; but, observing that Leicester changed countenance, he instantly added, "that all the ladies who were present had joined in ridiculing Lord Sussex's housekeeping, and in contrasting it with the reception her Grace would have assuredly received at my Lord of Leicester's."

"You have gathered much tidings," said Leicester, "but you have forgotten or omitted the most important of all. She hath added another to those dangling satellites, whom it is her pleasure to keep revolving around her."

"Your lordship meaneth that Raleigh, the Devonshire youth," said Varney, "the Knight of the Cloak, as they call him at court?"

"He may be Knight of the Garter, one day, for aught I know," said Leicester, "for he advances rapidly—She hath cap'd verses with him, and such fooleries. I would gladly abandon, of my own free will, the part I have in her fickle favour; but I will not be elbowed out of it by the clown Sussex, or this new upstart. I hear Tressilian is with Sussex also, and high in his favour—I would spare him for considerations, but he will thrust himself on his fate—Sussex, too, is almost as well as ever in his health."

"My lord," replied Varney, "there will be rubs in the smoothest road, specially when it leads up hill. Sussex's illness was to us a god-send, from which I hoped much. He has recovered indeed, but he is not now more formidable than ere he fell ill, when he received more than

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one foil in wrestling with your lordship. Let not your heart fail you, my lord, and all shall be well."

"My heart never failed me, sir," replied Leicester.

"No, my lord," said Varney; "but it has betrayed you right often. He that would climb a tree, my lord, must grasp by the branches, not by the blossom."

"Well, well, well!" said Leicester, impatiently; "I understand thy meaning—My heart shall neither fail me nor seduce me. Have my retinue in order—see that their array be so splendid as to put down not only the rude companions of Ratcliffe, but the retainers of every other nobleman and courtier. Let them be well armed withal, but without any outward display of their weapons, wearing them as if more for fashion's sake than for use. Do thou thyself keep close to me, I may have business for you."

The preparations of Sussex and his party were not less anxious than those of Leicester.

"Thy Supplication, impeaching Varney of seduction," said the Earl to Tressilian, "is by this time in the Queen's hand—I have sent it through a sure channel. Methinks your suit should succeed, being, as it is, founded in justice and honour, and Elizabeth being the very muster of both. But I wot now how—the gipsy" (so Sussex was wont to call his rival on account of his dark complexion) "hath much to say with her in these holiday times of peace—Were war at the gates, I should be one of her white boys; but soldiers, like their bucklers and Bilboa blades, get out of fashion in peace time, and satin sleeves and walking rapiers bear the bell. Well, we must be gay since such is the fashion.—Blount, hast thou seen our household put into their new braveries? —But thou know'st as little of these toys as I do—

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thou wouldst be ready enow at disposing a stand of pikes."

"My good lord," answered Blount, "Raleigh hath been here, and taken that charge upon him—Your train will glitter like a May morning.—Marry, the cost is another question. One might keep an hospital of old soldiers at the charge of ten modern lackeys."

"We must not count cost to-day, Nicholas," said the Earl in reply; "I am beholden to Raleigh for his care —I trust, though, he has remembered that I am an old soldier, and would have no more of these follies than needs must."

"Nay, I understand nought about it," said Blount; "but here are your honourable lordship's brave kinsmen and friends coming in by scores to wait upon you to court, where, methinks, we shall bear as brave a front as Leicester, let him ruffle it as he will."

"Give them the strictest charges," said Sussex, "that they suffer no provocation short of actual violence to provoke them into quarrel—they have hot bloods, and I would not give Leicester the advantage over me by any imprudence of theirs."

The Earl of Sussex ran so hastily through these directions, that it was with difficulty Tressilian at length found opportunity to express his surprise that he should have proceeded so far in the affair of Sir Hugh Robsart as to lay his petition at once before the Queen—"It was the opinion of the young lady' friends," he said, "that Leicester's sense of justice should be first appealed to, as the offence had been committed by his officer, and so he had expressly told to Sussex."

"This could have been done without applying to me," said Sussex, somewhat haughtily. "*I*, at least, ought

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not to have been a counsellor when the object was a humiliating reference to Leicester; and I am surprised that you, Tressilian, a man of honour, and my friend, would assume such a mean course. If you said so, I certainly understood you not in a matter which sounded so unlike yourself."

"My lord," said Tressilian, "the course I would prefer, for my own sake, is that you have adopted; but the friends of this most unhappy lady——"

"Oh, the friends—the friends," said Sussex, interrupting him; "they must let us manage this cause in the way which seems best. This is the time and the hour to accumulate every charge against Leicester and his household, and yours the Queen will hold a heavy one. But at all events she hath the complaint before her."

Tressilian could not help suspecting that, in his eagerness to strengthen himself against his rival, Sussex had purposely adopted the course most likely to throw odium on Leicester, without considering minutely whether it were the mode of proceeding most likely to be attended with success. But the step was irrevocable, and Sussex escaped from farther discussing it by dismissing his company, with the command, "Let all be in order at eleven o'clock; I must be at court and in the presence by high noon precisely."

While the rival statesmen were thus anxiously preparing for their approaching meeting in the Queen's presence, even Elizabeth herself was not without apprehension of what might chance from the collision of two such fiery spirits, each backed by a strong and numerous body of followers, and dividing betwixt them, either openly or in secret, the hopes and wishes of most of her court. The band of Gentlemen Pensioners were all under arms,

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and a reinforcement of the yeomen of the guard was brought down the Thames from London. A royal proclamation was sent forth, strictly prohibiting nobles, of whatever degree, to approach the Palace with retainers or followers, armed with shot, or with long weapons; and it was even whispered, that the High Sheriff of Kent had secret instructions to have a part of the array of the county ready on the shortest notice.

The eventful hour, thus anxiously prepared for on all sides, at length approached, and, each followed by his long and glittering train of friends and followers, the rival Earls entered the Palace-yard of Greenwich at noon precisely.

As if by previous arrangement, or perhaps by intimation that such was the Queen's pleasure, Sussex and his retinue came to the Palace from Deptford by water, while Leicester arrived by land; and thus they entered the court-yard from opposite sides. This trifling circumstance gave Leicester a certain ascendency in the opinion of the vulgar, the appearance of his cavalcade of mounted followers shewing more numerous and more imposing than those of Sussex's party, who were necessarily upon foot. No show or sign of greeting passed between the Earls, though each looked full at the other, both expecting perhaps an exchange of courtesies, which neither was willing to commence. Almost in the minute of their arrival the castle-bell tolled, the gates of the Palace were opened, and the Earls entered, each numerously attended by such gentlemen of their train whose rank gave them that privilege. The yeomen and inferior attendants remained in the court-yard, where the opposite parties eyed each other with looks of eager hatred and scorn, as if waiting with impatience for some cause of tumult, or

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some apology for mutual aggression. But they were restrained by the strict commands of their leaders, and overawed, perhaps, by the presence of an armed guard of unusual strength.

In the meanwhile, the more distinguished persons of each train followed their patrons into the lofty halls and ante-chambers of the royal Palace, flowing on in the same current, like two streams which are compelled into the same channel, yet shun to mix their waters. The parties arranged themselves, as it were instinctively, on the different sides of the lofty apartments, and seemed eager to escape from the transient union which the narrowness of the crowded entrance had for an instant compelled them to submit to. The folding doors at the upper end of the long gallery were immediately afterwards opened, and it was announced in a whisper that the Queen was in her presence-chamber, to which these gave access. Both Earls moved slowly and stately towards the entrance; Sussex followed by Tressilian, Blount, and Raleigh, and Leicester by Varney. The pride of Leicester was obliged to give way to court-forms, and with a grave and formal inclination of the head, he paused until his rival, a peer of older creation than his own, passed before him. Sussex returned the reverence with the same formal civility, and entered the presence-room. Tressilian and Blount offered to follow him, but were not permitted, the Usher of the Black Rod alleging in excuse, that he had precise orders to look to all admissions that day. To Raleigh, who stood back on the repulse of his companions, he said, "You, sir, may enter," and he entered accordingly.

"Follow me close, Varney," said the Earl of Leicester, who had stood aloof for a moment to mark the reception

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of Sussex; and, advancing to the entrance, he was about to pass on, when Varney, who was close behind him, dressed out in the utmost bravery of the day, was stopped by the usher, as Tressilian and Blount had been before him. "How is this, Master Bowyer?" said the Earl of Leicester. "Know you who I am, and that this is my friend and follower?"

"Your lordship will pardon me," replied Bowyer, stoutly; "my orders are precise, and limit me to a strict discharge of my duty."

"Thou art a partial knave," said Leicester, the blood mounting to his face, "to do me this dishonour, when you but now admitted a follower of my Lord of Sussex."

"My lord," said Bowyer, "Master Raleigh is newly admitted a sworn servant of her Grace, and to him my orders did not apply."

"Thou art a knave—an ungrateful knave," said Leicester; "but he that hath done, can undo—thou shalt not prank thee in thy authority long."

This threat he uttered aloud, with less than his usual policy and discretion, and having done so, he entered the presence chamber, and made his reverence to the Queen, who, attired with even more than her usual splendour, and surrounded by those nobles and statesmen whose courage and wisdom have rendered her reign immortal, stood ready to receive the homage of her subjects. She graciously returned the obeisance of the favourite Earl, and looked alternately at him and at Sussex, as if about to speak, when Bowyer, a man whose spirit could not brook the insult he had so openly received from Leicester, in the discharge of his office, advanced with his black rod in his hand, and knelt down before her.

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"Why, how now, Bowyer," said Elizabeth, "thy courtesy seems strangely timed!"

"My Liege Sovereign," he said, while every courtier around trembled at his audacity, "I come but to ask, whether, in the discharge of mine office, I am to obey your Highness' commands, or those of the Earl of Leicester, who has publicly menaced me with his displeasure, and treated me with disparaging terms, because I denied entry to one of his followers, in obedience to your Grace's precise orders?"

The spirit of Henry VIII. was instantly aroused in the bosom of his daughter, and she turned on Leicester with a severity which appalled him, as well as all his followers.

"God's death, my lord," such was her emphatic phrase, "what means this? We have thought well of you, and brought you near to our person; but it was not that you might hide the sun from our other faithful subjects. Who gave you license to contradict our orders, or control our officers? I will have in this court, ay, and in this realm, but one mistress, and no master. Look to it that Master Bowyer sustains no harm for his duty to me faithfully discharged; for, as I am Christian woman and crowned Queen, I will hold you dearly answerable. —Go, Bowyer, you have done the part of an honest man and a true subject. We will brook no mayor of the palace here."

Bowyer kissed the hand which she extended towards him, and withdrew to his post, astonished at the success of his own audacity. A smile of triumph pervaded the faction of Sussex; that of Leicester seemed proportionally dismayed, and the favourite himself, assuming an aspect of the deepest humility, did not even attempt a word in his own exculpation.

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He acted wisely; for it was the policy of Elizabeth to humble not to disgrace him, and it was prudent to suffer her, without opposition or reply, to glory in the exertion of her authority. The dignity of the Queen was gratified, and the woman began soon to feel for the mortification which she had imposed on her favourite. Her keen eye also observed the secret looks of congratulation exchanged amongst those who favoured Sussex, and it was no part of her policy to give either party a decisive triumph.

"What I say to my Lord of Leicester," she said, after a moment's pause, "I say also to you, my Lord of Sussex. You also must needs ruffle in the court of England, at the head of a faction of your own?"

"My followers, gracious Princess," said Sussex, "have indeed ruffled in your cause, in Ireland, in Scotland, and against yonder rebellious Earls in the north. I am ignorant that——"

"Do you bandy looks and words with me, my lord?" said the Queen, interrupting him; "methinks you might learn of my Lord of Leicester the modesty to be silent, at least, under our censure. I say, my lord, that my grandfather and my father in their wisdom, debarred the nobles of this civilized land from travelling with such disorderly retinues; and think you that because I wear a coif, their sceptre has in my hand been changed into a distaff? I tell you, no king in Christendom will less brook his court to be cumbered, his people oppressed, and his kingdom's peace disturbed by the arrogance of overgrown power, than she who now speaks with you.—My Lord of Leicester, and you, my Lord of Sussex, I command you both to be friends with each other; or by the crown I wear, you shall find an enemy who will be too strong for both of you!"

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"Madam," said the Earl of Leicester, "you who are yourself the fountain of honour, know best what is due to mine. I place it at your disposal, and only say, that the terms on which I have stood with my Lord of Sussex have not been of my seeking; nor had he cause to think me his enemy, until he had done me gross wrong."

"For me, madam," said the Earl of Sussex, "I cannot appeal from your sovereign pleasure; but I were well content my Lord of Leicester should say in what I have, as he terms it, wronged him, since my tongue never spoke the word that I would not willingly justify either on foot or horseback."

"And for me," said Leicester, "always under my gracious Sovereign's pleasure, my hand shall be as ready to make good my words as that of any man who ever wrote himself Ratcliffe."

"My lords," said the Queen, "these are no terms for this presence; and if you cannot keep your temper we will find means to keep both that and you close enough. Let me see you join hands, my lords, and forget your idle animosities,"

The two rivals looked at each other with reluctant eyes, each unwilling to make the first advance to execute the Queen's will.

"Sussex," said Elizabeth, "I entreat—Leicester, I command you."

Yet, so were her words accented, that the entreaty sounded like command, and the command like entreaty. They remained still and stubborn, until she raised her voice to a height which argued at once impatience and absolute command.

"Sir Henry Lee," she said to an officer in attendance, "have a guard in present readiness, and man a barge

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instantly.—My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, I bid you once more to join hands—and God's death! he that refuses shall taste of our Tower fare ere he see our face again. I will lower your proud hearts ere we part, and that I promise, on the word of a Queen."

"The prison," said Leicester, "might be borne, but to lose your Grace's presence, were to lose light and life at once.—Here, Sussex, is my hand."

"And here," said Sussex, "is mine in truth and honesty; but——"

"Nay, under favour, you shall add no more," said the Queen. "Why, this is as it should be," she added, looking on them more favourably, "and when you, the shepherds of the people, unite to protect them, it shall be well with the flock we rule over. For, my lords, I tell you plainly, your follies and your brawls lead to strange disorders among your servants.—My Lord of Leicester, you have a gentleman in your household called Varney?"

"Yes, gracious madam," replied Leicester, "I presented him to kiss your royal hand when you were last at Nonsuch."

"His outside was well enough," said the Queen, "but scarce so fair, I should have thought, as to have caused a maiden of honourable birth and hopes to barter her fame for his good looks, and become his paramour. Yet so it is—this fellow of yours hath seduced the daughter of a good old Devonshire knight, Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote Hall, and she hath fled with him from her father's house like a castaway.—My Lord of Leicester, are you ill, that you look so deadly pale?"

"No, gracious madam," said Leicester; and it required every effort he could make to bring forth these few words.

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"You are surely ill, my lord?" said Elizabeth, going towards him with hasty speech and hurried step, which indicated the deepest concern. "Call Masters—call our surgeon in ordinary—Where be these loitering fools?—We lose the pride of our court through their negligence. —Or is it possible, Leicester," she continued, looking on him with a very gentle aspect, "can fear of my displeasure have wrought so deeply on thee? Doubt not for a moment, noble Dudley, that we could blame *thee* for the folly of thy retainer—thee, whose thoughts we know to be far otherwise employed! He that would climb the eagle's nest, my lord, cares not who are catching linnets at the foot of the precipice."

"Mark you that?" said Sussex, aside to Raleigh. "The devil aids him surely; for all that would sink another ten fathom deep seems but to make him float the more easily. Had a follower of mine acted thus——"

"Peace, my good Lord," said Raleigh, "for God's sake, peace. Wait the change of the tide; it is even now on the turn."

The acute observation of Raleigh, perhaps, did not deceive him; for Leicester's confusion was so great, and, indeed, for the moment, so irresistibly overwhelming, that Elizabeth, after looking at him with a wondering eye, and receiving no intelligible answer to the unusual expressions of grace and affection which had escaped from her, shot her quick glance around the circle of courtiers, and reading, perhaps, in their faces, something that accorded with her own awakened suspicions, she said suddenly, "Or is there more in this than we see—or than you, my lord, wish that we should see? Where is this Varney? Who saw him?"

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"An it please your Grace," said Bowyer, "it is the same against whom I this instant closed the door of the presence-room."

"An it please me?" repeated Elizabeth, sharply, not at that moment in the humour of being pleased with any thing,—"It does *not* please me that he should pass saucily into my presence, or that you should exclude from it one who came to justify himself from an accusation."

"May it please you," answered the perplexed usher, "if I knew, in such case, how to bear myself, I would take heed——"

"You should have reported the fellow's desire to us, Master Usher, and taken our directions. You think yourself a great man, because but now we chid a nobleman on your account—yet, after all, we hold you but as the lead-weight that keeps the door fast. Call this Varney hither instantly—there is one Tressilian also mentioned in this petition—let them both come before us."

She was obeyed, and Tressilian and Varney appeared accordingly. Varney's first glance was at Leicester, his second at the Queen. In the looks of the latter, there appeared an approaching storm, and in the downcast countenance of his patron, he could read no directions in what way he was to trim his vessel for the encounter—he then saw Tressilian, and at once perceived the peril of the situation in which he was placed. But Varney was as bold-faced and ready-witted as he was cunning and unscrupulous,—a skilful pilot in extremity, and fully conscious of the advantages which he would obtain, could he extricate Leicester from his present peril, and of the ruin that yawned for himself, should he fail in doing so.

"Is it true, sirrah," said the Queen, with one of those

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searching looks which few had the audacity to resist, "that you have seduced to infamy a young lady of birth and breeding, the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart of Lidcote Hall?"

Varney kneeled down, and replied, with a look of the most profound contrition, "There had been some love passages betwixt him and Mistress Amy Robsart."

Leicester's flesh quivered with indignation as he heard his dependent make this avowal, and for one moment he manned himself to step forward, and, bidding farewell to the court and the royal favour, confess the whole mystery of the secret marriage. But he looked at Sussex, and the idea of the triumphant smile which would clothe his cheek upon hearing the avowal, sealed his lips. "Not now, at least," he thought, "or in this presence, will I afford him so rich a triumph." And pressing his lips close together, he stood firm and collected, attentive to each word which Varney uttered, and determined to hide to the last the secret on which his court-favour seemed to depend. Meanwhile, the Queen proceeded in her examination of Varney.

"Love passages!" said she, echoing his last words; "what passages, thou knave? and why not ask the wench's hand from her father, if thou hadst any honesty in thy love for her?"

"An it please your Grace," said Varney, still on his knees, "I dared not do so, for her father had promised her hand to a gentlemen of birth and honour—I will do him justice, though I know he bears me ill will—one Master Edmund Tressilian, whom I now see in the presence."

"Soh!" replied the Queen; "and what was your right to make the simple fool break her worthy father's con-

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tract, through your love *passages*, as your conceit and assurance term them?"

"Madam," replied Varney, "it is in vain to plead the cause of human frailty before a judge to whom it is unknown, or that of love, to one who never yields to the passion"—He paused an instant, and then added, in a very low and timid tone, "which she inflicts upon all others."

Elizabeth tried to frown, but smiled in her own despite, as she answered, "Thou art a marvellously impudent knave—Art thou married to the girl?"

Leicester's feelings became so complicated and so painfully intense, that it seemed to him as if his life was to depend on the answer made by Varney, who, after a moment's real hesitation, answered, "Yes."

"Thou false villain!" said Leicester, bursting forth into rage, yet unable to add another word to the sentence, which he had begun with such emphatic passion.

"Nay, my lord," said the Queen, "we will, by your leave, stand between this fellow and your anger. We have not yet done with him.—Knew your master, my Lord of Leicester, of this fair work of yours? Speak truth, I command thee, and I will be thy warrant from danger on every quarter."

"Gracious madam," said Varney, "to speak heaven's truth, my lord was the cause of the whole matter."

"Thou villain, wouldst thou betray me?" said Leicester.

"Speak on," said the Queen, hastily, her cheek colcuring, and her eyes sparkling, as she addressed Varney; "speak on—here no commands are heard but mine."

"They are omnipotent, gracious madam," replied Varney; "and to you there can be no secrets.—Yet I would

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not," he added, looking around him, "speak of my master's concerns to other ears."

"Fall back, my lords," said the Queen to those who surrounded her, "and do you speak on.—What hath the Earl to do with this guilty intrigue of thine?—See, fellow, that thou belie'st him not!"

"Far be it from me to traduce my noble patron," replied Varney; "yet I am compelled to own that some deep, overwhelming, yet secret feeling, hath of late dwelt in my lord's mind, hath abstracted him from the cares of the household, which he was wont to govern with such religious strictness, and hath left us opportunities to do follies, of which the shame, as in this case, partly falls upon our patron. Without this, I had not had means or leisure to commit the folly which has drawn on me his displeasure; the heaviest to endure by me, which I could by any means incur,—saving always the yet more dreaded resentment of your Grace."

"And in this sense, and no other, hath he been accessory to thy fault?" said Elizabeth.

"Surely, madam, in no other," replied Varney; "but since somewhat hath chanced to him, he can scarce be called his own man. Look at him, madam, how pale and trembling he stands—how unlike his usual majesty of manner—yet what has he to fear from aught I can say to your Highness? Ah! madam, since he received that fatal packet!"

"What packet, and from whence?" said the Queen, eagerly.

"From whence, madam, I cannot guess; but I am so near to his person, that I know he has ever since worn, suspended around his neck, and next to his heart, that lock of hair which sustains a small golden jewel shaped

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like a heart—he speaks to it when alone—he parts not from it when he sleeps—no heathen ever worshipped an idol with such devotion."

"Thou art a prying knave to watch thy master so closely," said Elizabeth, blushing, but not with anger; "and a tattling knave to tell over again his fooleries.—What colour might the braid of hair be that thou pratest of?"

Varney replied, "A poet, madam, might call it a thread from the golden web wrought by Minerva; but, to my thinking, it was paler than even the purest gold—more like the last parting sunbeam of the softest day of spring."

"Why, you are a poet yourself, Master Varney," said the Queen, smiling; "but I have not genius quick enough to follow your rare metaphors—Look round these ladies—is there"—(she hesitated, and endeavoured to assume an air of great indifference)—"Is there here, in this presence, any lady, the colour of whose hair reminds thee of that braid? Methinks, without prying into my Lord of Leicester's amorous secrets, I would fain know what kind of locks are like the thread of Minerva's web, or the—what was it?—the last rays of the Mayday sun."

Varney looked round the presence-chamber, his eye travelling from one lady to another, until at length it rested upon the Queen herself, but with an aspect of the deepest veneration. "I see no tresses," he said, "in this presence, worthy of such similes, unless where I dare not look on them."

"How, sir knave," said the Queen, "dare you intimate——"

"Nay, madam," replied Varney, shading his eyes with his hand, "it was the beams of the Mayday sun that dazzled my weak eyes."

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"Go to—go to," said the Queen; "thou art a foolish fellow"—and turning quickly from him she walked up to Leicester.

Intense curiosity, mingled with all the various hopes, fears, and passions, which influence court faction, had occupied the presence-chamber during the Queen's conference with Varney, as if with the strength of an Eastern talisman. Men suspended every, even the slightest external motion, and would have ceased to breathe, had Nature permitted such an intermission of her functions. The atmosphere was contagious, and Leicester, who saw all around wishing or fearing his advancement or his fall, forgot all that love had previously dictated, and saw nothing for the instant but the favour or disgrace, which depended on the nod of Elizabeth and the fidelity of Varney. He summoned himself hastily, and prepared to play his part in the scene which was like to ensue, when, as he judged from the glances which the Queen threw towards him, Varney's communications, be they what they might, were operating in his favour. Elizabeth did not long leave him in doubt; for the more than favour with which she accosted him decided his triumph in the eyes of his rival, and of the assembled court of England—"Thou hast a prating servant of this same Varney, my lord," she said; "it is lucky you trust him with nothing that can hurt you in our opinion, for, believe me, he would keep no counsel."

"From your Highness," said Leicester, dropping gracefully on one knee, "it were treason he should. I would that my heart itself lay before you, barer than the tongue of any servant could strip it."

"What, my lord," said Elizabeth, looking kindly upon him, "is there no one little corner over which you would

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wish to spread a veil? Ah! I see you are confused at the question, and your Queen knows she should not look too deeply into her servants' motives for their faithful duty, lest she see what might, or at least, ought to, displease her."

Relieved by these last words, Leicester broke out into a torrent of expressions of deep and passionate attachment, which, perhaps, at that moment, were not altogether fictitious. The mingled emotions which had at first overcome him, had now given way to the energetic vigour with which he had determined to support his place in the Queen's favour; and never did he seem to Elizabeth more eloquent, more handsome, more interesting, than while, kneeling at her feet, he conjured her to strip him of all his power, but to leave him the name of her servant.—"Take from the poor Dudley," he exclaimed, "all that your bounty has made him, and bid him be the poor gentleman he was when your grace first shone on him; leave him no more than his cloak and his sword, but let him still boast he has—what in word or deed he never forfeited—the regard of his adored Queen and mistress!"

"No, Dudley!" said Elizabeth, raising him with one hand, while she extended the other that he might kiss it; "Elizabeth hath not forgotten that, whilst you were a poor gentleman, despoiled of your hereditary rank, she was as poor a princess, and that in her cause you then ventured all that oppression had left you,—your life and honour.—Rise, my lord, and let my hand go!—Rise, and be what you have ever been, the grace of our court, and the support of our throne. Your mistress may be forced to chide your misdemeanours, but never without owning your merits.—And so help me God," she added, turning to the audience, who with various feelings witnessed this

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interesting scene,—"So help me God, gentlemen, as I think never sovereign had a truer servant than I have in this noble Earl!"

A murmur of assent rose from the Leicesterian faction, which the friends of Sussex dared not oppose. They remained with their eyes fixed on the ground, dismayed as well as mortified by the public and absolute triumph of their opponents. Leicester's first use of the familiarity to which the Queen had so publicly restored him, was to ask her commands concerning Varney's offence. "Although," he said, "the fellow deserves nothing from me but displeasure, yet, might I presume to intercede——"

"In truth, we had forgotten his matter," said the Queen; "and it was ill done of us, who owe justice to our meanest, as well as to our highest subject. We are pleased, my lord, that you were the first to recall the matter to our memory.—Where is Tressilian, the accuser?—let him come before us."

Tressilian appeared, and made a low and beseeming reverence. His person, as we have elsewhere observed, had an air of grace and even of nobleness, which did not escape Queen Elizabeth's critical observation. She looked at him with attention, as he stood before her unabashed, but with an air of the deepest dejection.

"I cannot but grieve for this gentleman," she said to Leicester. "I have inquired concerning him, and his presence confirms what I heard, that he is a scholar and a soldier, well accomplished both in arts and arms. We women, my lord, are fanciful in our choice—I had said now, to judge by the eye, there was no comparison to be held betwixt your follower and this gentleman. But Varney is a well-spoken fellow, and to say truth, that goes far with us of the weaker sex.—Look you, Master Tres-

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silian, a bolt lost is not a bow broken. Your true affection, as I will hold it to be, hath been, it seems, but ill requited; but you have scholarship, and you know there have been false Cressidas to be found, from the Trojan war downward. Forget, good sir, this Lady Light-o'-Love—teach your affection to see with a wiser eye. This we say to you, more from the writings of learned men, than our own knowledge, being, as we are, far removed by station and will, from the enlargement of experience in such idle toys of humorous passion. For this dame's father, we can make his grief the less, by advancing his son-in-law to such station as may enable him to give an honourable support to his bride. Thou shalt not be forgotten thyself, Tressilian—follow our court, and thou shalt see that a true Troilus hath some claim on our grace. Think of what that arch-knave Shakspeare says—a plague on him, his toys come into my head when I should think of other matter—Stay, how goes it?

> 'Cressid was yours, tied with the bonds of heaven;
> These bonds of heaven are slipt, dissolved, and loosed,
> And with another knot five fingers tied,
> The fragments of her faith are bound to Diomed.'

You smile, my Lord of Southampton—perchance I make your player's verse halt through my bad memory—but let it suffice—let there be no more of this mad matter."

And as Tressilian kept the posture of one who would willingly be heard, though, at the same time, expressive of the deepest reverence, the Queen added with some impatience,—"What would the man have? The wench cannot wed both of you?—She has made her election—not a wise one perchance—but she is Varney's wedded wife."

"My suit should sleep there, most gracious Sovereign,"

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said Tressilian, "and with my suit my revenge. But I hold this Varney's word no good warrant for the truth."

"Had that doubt been elsewhere urged," answered Varney, "my sword——"

"*Thy* sword!" interrupted Tressilian, scornfully; "with her Grace's leave, my sword shall shew——"

"Peace, you knaves, both!" said the Queen; "know you where you are?—This comes of your feuds, my lords," she added, looking towards Leicester and Sussex; "your followers catch your own humour, and must bandy and brawl in my court, and in my very presence, like so many Matamoros.—Look you, sirs, he that speaks of drawing swords in any other quarrel than mine or England's, by mine honour, I'll bracelet him with iron both on wrist and ankle!" She then paused a minute, and resumed in a milder tone, "I must do justice betwixt the bold and mutinous knaves notwithstanding.—My Lord of Leicester, will you warrant with your honour—that is, to the best of your belief—that your servant speaks truth in saying he hath married this Amy Robsart?"

This was a home-thrust, and had nearly staggered Leicester. But he had now gone too far to recede, and answered, after a moment's hesitation, "To the best of my belief—indeed on my certain knowledge—she is a wedded wife."

"Gracious madam," said Tressilian, "may I yet request to know when and under what circumstances this alleged marriage——"

"Out, sirrah," answered the Queen; "*alleged* marriage!—Have you not the word of this illustrious Earl to warrant the truth of what his servant says? But thou art a loser—think'st thyself such at least—and thou shalt have indulgence—we will look into the matter ourself

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more at leisure.—My Lord of Leicester, I trust you remember we mean to taste the good cheer of your castle of Kenilworth on this week ensuing—we will pray you to bid our good and valued friend the Earl of Sussex to hold company with us there."

"If the noble Earl of Sussex," said Leicester, bowing to his rival with the easiest and with the most graceful courtesy, "will so far honour my poor house, I will hold it an additional proof of the amicable regard it is your Grace's desire we should entertain towards each other."

Sussex was more embarrassed—"I should," said he, "madam, be but a clog on your gayer hours since my late severe illness."

"And have you been indeed so very ill?" said Elizabeth, looking on him with more attention than before; "you are in faith strangely altered, and deeply am I grieved to see it. But be of good cheer—we will ourselves look after the health of so valued a servant, and to whom we owe so much. Masters shall order your diet; and that we ourselves may see that he is obeyed, you must attend us in this progress to Kenilworth."

This was said so peremptorily, and at the same time with so much kindness, that Sussex, however unwilling to become the guest of his rival, had no resqurce but to bow low to the Queen in obedience to her commands, and to express to Leicester, with blunt courtesy, though mingled with embarrassment, his acceptance of his invitation. As the Earls exchanged compliments on the occasion, the Queen said to her High Treasurer, "Methinks, my lord, the countenances of these our two noble peers resemble those of the two famed classic streams, the one so dark and sad, the other so fair and noble—My old Master Ascham would have chid me for forgetting the author—

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It is Cæsar, as I think.—See what majestic calmness sits on the brow of the noble Leicester, while Sussex seems to greet him as if he did our will indeed, but not willingly."

"The doubt of your Majesty's favour," answered the Lord Treasurer, "may perchance occasion the difference, which does not,—as what does?—escape your Grace's eye."

"Such doubt were injurious to us, my lord," replied the Queen. "We hold both to be near and dear to us, and will with impartiality employ both in honourable service for the weal of our kingdom. But we will break their farther conference at present.—My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, we have a word more with you. Tressilian and Varney are near your persons—you will see that they attend you at Kenilworth—And as we shall then have both Paris and Menelaus within our call, so we will have this same fair Helen also, whose fickleness has caused this broil. Varney, thy wife must be at Kenilworth, and forthcoming at my order.—My Lord of Leicester, we expect you will look to this."

The Earl and his follower bowed low, and raised their heads, without daring to look at the Queen, or at each other; for both felt at the instant as if the nets and toils which their own falsehood had woven, were in the act of closing around them. The Queen, however, observed not their confusion, but proceeded to say, "My Lords of Sussex and Leicester, we require your presence at the privy council to be presently held, where matters of importance are to be debated. We will then take the water for our divertisement, and you, my lords, will attend us.—And that reminds us of a circumstance—Do you, Sir Squire of the Soiled Cassock," (distinguishing Raleigh by

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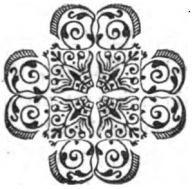
a smile,) "fail not to observe that you are to attend us on our progress. You shall be supplied with suitable means to reform your wardrobe."

And so terminated this celebrated audience, in which, as throughout her life, Elizabeth united the occasional caprice of her sex, with that sense and sound policy, in which neither man nor woman ever excelled her.



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CHAPTER XVII.

Well, then—our course is chosen—spread the sail—
Heave oft the lead, and mark the soundings well—
Look to the helm, good master—many a shoal
Marks this stern coast, and rocks, where sits the Siren,
Who, like ambition, lures men to their ruin.

THE SHIPWRECK.

DURING the brief interval that took place betwixt the dismissal of the audience and the sitting of the privy council, Leicester had time to reflect that he had that morning sealed his own fate. "It was impossible for him now," he thought, "after having, in the face of all that was honourable in England, pledged his truth (though in an ambiguous phrase) for the statement of Varney, to contradict or disavow it, without exposing himself not merely to the loss of court favour, but to the highest displeasure of the Queen, his deceived mistress, and to the scorn and contempt at once of his rival and of all his compeers." This certainty rushed at once on his mind, together with all the difficulties which he would necessarily be exposed to in preserving a secret, which seemed now equally essential to his safety, to his power, and to his honour. He was situated like one who walks upon ice, ready to give way around him, and whose only safety consists in moving onwards, by firm and unvacillating steps. The Queen's favour, to preserve which he had made such sacrifices, must now be secured by all

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means and at all hazards—it was the only plank which he could cling to in the tempest. He must settle himself, therefore, to the task of not only preserving, but augmenting, the Queen's partiality—He must be the favourite of Elizabeth, or a man utterly shipwrecked in fortune and in honour. All other considerations must be laid aside for the moment, and he repelled the intrusive thoughts which forced on his mind the image of Amy, by saying to himself, there would be time to think hereafter how he was to escape from the labyrinth ultimately, since the pilot, who sees a Scylla under his bows, must not for the time think of the more distant dangers of Charybdis.

In this mood, the Earl of Leicester that day assumed his chair at the council table of Elizabeth; and when the hours of business were over, in this same mood did he occupy an honoured place near her, during her pleasure excursion on the Thames. And never did he display to more advantage his powers as a politician of the first rank, or his parts as an accomplished courtier.

It chanced that in that day's council matters were agitated touching the affairs of the unfortunate Mary, the seventh year of whose captivity in England was now in doleful currency. There had been opinions in favour of this unhappy princess laid before Elizabeth's council, and supported with much strength of argument by Sussex and others, who dwelt more upon the law of nations and the breach of hospitality, than, however softened or qualified, was agreeable to the Queen's ear. Leicester adopted the contrary opinion with great animation and eloquence, and described the necessity of continuing the severe restraint of the Queen of Scots, as a measure essential to the safety of the kingdom, and particularly of

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Elizabeth's sacred person, the lightest hair of whose head, he maintained, ought, in their lordships' estimation, to be matter of more deep and anxious concern, than the life and fortunes of a rival, who, after setting up a vain and unjust pretence to the throne of England, was now, even while in the bosom of her country, the constant hope and theme of encouragement to all enemies to Elizabeth, whether at home or abroad. He ended by craving pardon of their lordships, if in the zeal of speech he had given any offence; but the Queen's safety was a theme which hurried him beyond his usual moderation of debate.

Elizabeth chid him, but not severely, for the weight which he attached unduly to her personal interests; yet she owned, that since it had been the pleasure of Heaven to combine those interests with the weal of her subjects, she did only her duty when she adopted such measures of self-preservation as circumstances forced upon her; and if the council in their wisdom should be of opinion, that it was needful to continue some restraint on the person of her unhappy sister of Scotland, she trusted they would not blame her if she requested of the Countess of Shrewsbury to use her with as much kindness as might be consistent with her safe keeping. And with this intimation of her pleasure, the council was dismissed.

Never was more anxious and ready way made for "my Lord of Leicester," than as he passed through the crowded anterooms to go towards the river side, in order to attend her Majesty to her barge—Never was the voice of the ushers louder, to "make room—make room for the noble Earl"—Never were these signals more promptly and reverentially obeyed—Never were more anxious eyes

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turned on him to obtain a glance of favour, or even of mere recognition, while the heart of many an humble follower throbbed betwixt the desire to offer his congratulations, and the fear of intruding himself on the notice of one so infinitely above him. The whole court considered the issue of this day's audience, expected with so much doubt and anxiety, as a decisive triumph on the part of Leicester, and felt assured that the orb of his rival satellite, if not altogether obscured by his lustre, must revolve hereafter in a dimmer and more distant sphere. So thought the court and courtiers, from high to low, and they acted accordingly.

On the other hand, never did Leicester return the general greeting with such ready and condescending courtesy, or endeavour more successfully to gather (in the words of one, who at that moment stood at no great distance from him) "golden opinions from all sorts of men."

For all the favourite Earl had a bow, a smile at least, and often a kind word. Most of these were addressed to courtiers, whose names have long gone down the tide of oblivion; but some, to such as sound strangely in our ears, when connected with the ordinary matters of human life, above which the gratitude of posterity has long elevated them. A few of Leicester's interlocutory sentences ran as follows:

"Poynings, good-morrow, and how does your wife and fair daughter? Why come they not to court?—Adams, your suit is naught—the Queen will grant no more monopolies—but I may serve you in another matter.—My good Alderman Aylford, the suit of the city, affecting Queenhithe, shall be forwarded as far as my poor interest can serve.—Master Edmund Spenser, touching your

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Irish petition, I would willingly aid you, from my love to the Muses; but thou hast nettled the Lord Treasurer."

"My lord," said the poet, "were I permitted to explain——"

"Come to my lodging, Edmund," answered the Earl—"not to-morrow, or next day, but soon.—Ha, Will Shakspeare—wild Will!—thou hast given my nephew, Philip Sidney, love-powder—he cannot sleep without thy Venus and Adonis under his pillow! We will have thee hanged for the veriest wizard in Europe. Hark thee, mad wag, I have not forgotten thy matter of the patent, and of the bears."

The *player* bowed, and the Earl nodded and passed on—so that age would have told the tale—in ours, perhaps, we might say the immortal had done homage to the mortal. The next whom the favourite accosted, was one of his own zealous dependents.

"How now, Sir Francis Denning," he whispered, in answer to his exulting salutation, "that smile hath made thy face shorter by one-third than when I first saw it this morning.—What, Master Bowyer, stand you back, and think you I bear malice? You did but your duty this morning; and, if I remember aught of the passage betwixt us, it shall be in thy favour."

Then the Earl was approached, with several fantastic congees, by a person quaintly dressed in a doublet of black velvet, curiously slashed and pinked with crimson satin. A long cock's feather in the velvet bonnet, which he held in his hand, and an enormous ruff, stiffened to the extremity of the absurd taste of the times, joined with a sharp, lively, conceited expression of countenance, seemed to body forth a vain, harebrained coxcomb, and small wit; while the rod he held, and an assumption of

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formal authority, appeared to express some sense of official consequence, which qualified the natural pertness of his manner. A perpetual blush, which occupied rather the sharp nose than the thin cheek of this personage, seemed to speak more of "good life," as it was called, than of modesty; and the manner in which he approached to the Earl, confirmed that suspicion.

"Good even to you, Master Robert Laneham," said Leicester, and seemed desirous to pass forward, without farther speech.

"I have a suit to your noble lordship," said the figure, boldly following him.

"And what is it, good master keeper of the council-chamber door?"

"*Clerk* of the council-chamber door," said Master Robert Laneham, with emphasis, by way of reply, and of correction.

"Well, qualify thine office as thou wilt, man," replied the Earl; "what wouldst thou have with me?"

"Simply," answered Laneham, "that your lordship would be, as heretofore, my good lord, and procure me license to attend the Summer progress unto your lordship's most beautiful, and all-to-be unmatched Castle of Kenilworth."

"To what purpose, good Master Laneham," replied the Earl; "bethink you, my guests must needs be many."

"Not so many," replied the petitioner, "but that your nobleness will willingly spare your old servitor his crib and his mess. Bethink you, my lord, how necessary is this rod of mine, to fright away all those listeners, who else would play at bo-peep with the honourable council, and be searching for key-holes and crannies in the door

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of the chamber, so as to render my staff as needful as a fly-flap in a butcher's shop."

"Methinks you have found out a fly-blown comparison for the honourable council, Master Laneham," said the Earl; "but seek not about to justify it. Come to Kenilworth, if you list; there will be store of fools there besides, and so you will be fitted."

"Nay, an there be fools, my lord," replied Laneham, with much glee, "I warrant I will make sport among them; for no greyhound loves to cote a hare, as I to turn and course a fool. But I have another singular favour to beseech of your honour."

"Speak it, and let me go," said the Earl; "I think the Queen comes forth instantly."

"My very good lord, I would fain bring a bed-fellow with me."

"How, you irreverent rascal!" said Leicester.

"Nay, my lord, my meaning is within the canons," answered his unblushing, or rather his ever-blushing petitioner. "I have a wife as curious as her grandmother, who eat the apple. Now, take her with me I may not, her Highness's orders being so strict against the officers bringing with them their wives in a progress, and so lumbering the court with womankind. But what I would crave of your lordship is, to find room for her in some mummery, or pretty pageant, in disguise, as it were; so that, not being known for my wife, there may be no offence."

"The foul fiend seize ye both!" said Leicester, stung into uncontrollable passion by the recollection which this speech excited—"Why stop you me with such follies?"

The terrified clerk of the chamber-door, astonished at the burst of resentment he had so unconsciously produced,

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dropped his staff of office from his hand, and gazed on the incensed Earl with a foolish face of wonder and terror, which instantly recalled Leicester to himself.

"I meant but to try if thou hadst the audacity which befits thine office," said he hastily. "Come to Kenilworth, and bring the devil with thee, if thou wilt."

"My wife, sir, hath played the devil ere now, in a Mystery, in Queen Mary's time—but we shall want a trifle for properties."

"Here is a crown for thee," said the Earl,—"make me rid of thee—the great bell rings."

Master Robert Laneham stared a moment at the agitation which he had excited, and then said to himself, as he stooped to pick up his staff of office, "The noble Earl runs wild humours to-day; but they who give crowns, expect us witty fellows to wink at their unsettled starts; and, by my faith, if they paid not for mercy, we would finger them tightly!" *

Leicester moved hastily on, neglecting the courtesies he had hitherto dispensed so liberally, and hurrying through the courtly crowd, until he paused in a small

* Little is known of Robert Laneham, save in his curious letter to a friend in London, giving an account of Queen Elizabeth's entertainments at Kenilworth, written in a style of the most intolerable affectation, both in point of composition and orthography. He describes himself as a *bon vivant*, who was wont to be jolly and dry in the morning, and by his good-will would be chiefly in the company of the ladies. He was, by the interest of Lord Leicester, Clerk of the Council-Chamber door, and also keeper of the same. "When council sits," says he, "I am at hand. If any makes a babbling, *Peace*, say I. If I see a listener or a pryer in at the chinks or lockhole, I am presently on the bones of him. If a friend comes, I make him sit down by me on a form or chest. The rest may walk, a God's name!" There has been seldom a better portrait of the pragmatic conceit and self-importance of a small man in office.

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withdrawing-room, into which he plunged to draw a moment's breath unobserved, and in seclusion.

"What am I now," he said to himself, "that am thus jaded by the words of a mean, weather-beaten, goose-brained gull!—Conscience, thou art a bloodhound, whose growl wakes as readily at the paltry stir of a rat or mouse, as at the step of a lion.—Can I not quit myself, by one bold stroke, of a state so irksome, so unhonoured? What if I kneel to Elizabeth, and, owning the whole, throw myself on her mercy?"

As he pursued this train of thought, the door of the apartment opened, and Varney rushed in.

"Thank God, my lord, that I have found you!" was his exclamation.

"Thank the devil, whose agent thou art," was the Earl's reply.

"Thank whom you will, my lord," replied Varney; "but hasten to the water-side. The Queen is on board, and asks for you."

"Go, say I am taken suddenly ill," replied Leicester; "for, by Heaven, my brain can sustain this no longer!"

"I may well say so," said Varney, with bitterness of expression, "for your place, ay, and mine, who, as your master of the horse, was to have attended your lordship, is already filled up in the Queen's barge. The new minion, Walter Raleigh, and our old acquaintance, Tressilian, were called for to fill our places just as I hastened away to seek you."

"Thou art a devil, Varney," said Leicester hastily; "but thou hast the mastery for the present—I follow thee."

Varney replied not, but led the way out of the palace, and towards the river, while his master followed him, as

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if mechanically; until, looking back, he said in a tone which savoured of familiarity at least, if not of authority, "How is this, my lord?—your cloak hangs on one side, —your hose are unbraced—permit me——"

"Thou art a fool, Varney, as well as a knave," said Leicester, shaking him off, and rejecting his officious assistance; "we are best thus, sir—when we require you to order our person, it is well, but now we want you not."

So saying, the Earl resumed at once his air of command, and with it his self-possession—shook his dress into yet wilder disorder—passed before Varney with the air of a superior and master, and in his turn led the way to the river side.

The Queen's barge was on the very point of putting off; the seat allotted to Leicester in the stern, and that to his master of the horse on the bow of the boat, being already filled up. But on Leicester's approach there was a pause, as if the bargemen anticipated some alteration in their company. The angry spot was, however, on the Queen's cheek, as, in that cold tone with which superiors endeavour to veil their internal agitation, while speaking to those before whom it would be derogation to express it, she pronounced the chilling words—"We have waited, my Lord of Leicester."

"Madam, and most gracious Princess," said Leicester, "you, who can pardon so many weaknesses which your own heart never knows, can best bestow your commiseration on the agitations of the bosom, which, for a moment, affect both head and limbs.—I came to your presence a doubting and an accused subject; your goodness penetrated the clouds of defamation, and restored me to my honour, and, what is yet dearer, to your favour—is it wonderful, though for me it is most unhappy, that my

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master of the horse should have found me in a state which scarce permitted me to make the exertion necessary to follow him to this place, when one glance of your Highness, although, alas! an angry one, has had power to do that for me, in which Esculapius might have failed?"

"How is this?" said Elizabeth hastily, looking at Varney; "hath your lord been ill?"

"Something of a fainting fit," answered the ready-witted Varney, "as your Grace may observe from his present condition. My lord's haste would not permit me leisure even to bring his dress into order."

"It matters not," said Elizabeth, as she gazed on the noble face and form of Leicester, to which even the strange mixture of passions by which he had been so lately agitated, gave additional interest, "make room for my noble lord—Your place, Master Varney, has been filled up; you must find a seat in another barge."

Varney bowed, and withdrew.

"And you, too, our young Squire of the Cloak," added she, looking at Raleigh, "must, for the time, go to the barge of our ladies of honour. As for Tressilian, he hath already suffered too much by the caprice of women, that I should aggrieve him by my change of plan, so far as he is concerned."

Leicester seated himself in his place in the barge, and close to the Sovereign; Raleigh rose to retire, and Tressilian would have been so ill-timed in his courtesy as to offer to relinquish his own place to his friend, had not the acute glance of Raleigh himself, who seemed now in his native element, made him sensible, that so ready a disclamation of the royal favour might be misinterpreted. He sate silent, therefore, whilst Raleigh, with a profound

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bow, and a look of the deepest humiliation, was about to quit his place.

A noble courtier, the gallant Lord Willoughby, read, as he thought, something in the Queen's face, which seemed to pity Raleigh's real or assumed semblance of mortification.

"It is not for us old courtiers," he said, "to hide the sunshine from the young ones. I will, with her Majesty's leave, relinquish for an hour that which her subjects hold dearest, the delight of her Highness's presence, and mortify myself by walking in starlight, while I forsake for a brief season the glory of Diana's own beams. I will take place in the boat which the ladies occupy, and permit this young cavalier his hour of promised felicity."

The Queen replied, with an expression betwixt mirth and earnest, "If you are so willing to leave us, my lord, we cannot help the mortification. But, under favour, we do not trust you—old and experienced as you may deem yourself—with the care of our young ladies of honour. Your venerable age, my lord," she continued, smiling, "may be better assorted with that of my Lord Treasurer, who follows in the third boat, and by whose experience even my Lord Willoughby's may be improved."

Lord Willoughby hid his disappointment under a smile—laughed, was confused, bowed, and left the Queen's barge to go on board my Lord Burleigh's. Leicester, who endeavoured to divert his thoughts from all internal reflection, by fixing them on what was passing around, watched this circumstance among others. But when the boat put off from the shore—when the music sounded from a barge which accompanied them—when the shouts of the populace were heard from the shore, and all reminded him of the situation in which he was placed, he

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abstracted his thoughts and his feelings by a strong effort from every thing but the necessity of maintaining himself in the favour of his patroness, and exerted his talents of pleasing captivation with such success, that the Queen, alternately delighted with his conversation, and alarmed for his health, at length imposed a temporary silence on him, with playful yet anxious care, lest his flow of spirits should exhaust him.

"My lords," she said, "having passed for a time our edict of silence upon our good Leicester, we will call you to counsel on a gamesome matter, more fitted to be now treated of, amidst mirth and music, than in the gravity of our ordinary deliberations.—Which of you, my lords," said she, smiling, "know aught of a petition from Orson Pinnit, the keeper, as he qualifies himself, of our royal bears? Who stands godfather to his request?"

"Marry, with your Grace's good permission, that do I," said the Earl of Sussex.—"Orson Pinnit was a stout soldier before he was so mangled by the skenes of the Irish clan MacDonough, and I trust your Grace will be, as you always have been, good mistress to your good and trusty servants."

"Surely," said the Queen, "it is our purpose to be so, and in especial to our poor soldiers and sailors, who hazard their lives for a little pay. We would give," she said, with her eyes sparkling, "yonder royal palace of ours to be an hospital for their use, rather than they should call their mistress ungrateful.—But this is not the question," she said, her voice, which had been awakened by her patriotic feelings, once more subsiding into the tone of gay and easy conversation; "for this Orson Pinnit's request goes something farther. He complains, that amidst the extreme delight with which men haunt the play-houses,

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and in especial their eager desire for seeing the exhibitions of one Will Shakspeare, (whom, I think, my lords, we have all heard something of,) the manly amusement of bear-baiting is falling into comparative neglect; since men will rather throng to see these roguish players kill each other in jest, than to see our royal dogs and bears worry each other in bloody earnest—What say you to this, my Lord of Sussex?"

"Why, truly, gracious madam," said Sussex, "you must expect little from an old soldier like me in favour of battles in sport, when they are compared with battles in earnest; and yet, by my faith, I wish Will Shakspeare no harm. He is a stout man at quarter-staff, and single falchion, though, as I am told, a halting fellow; and he stood, they say, a tough fight with the rangers of old Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecot, when he broke his deer-park and kissed his keeper's daughter."

"I cry you mercy, my Lord of Sussex," said Queen Elizabeth, interrupting him; "that matter was heard in council, and we will not have this fellow's offence exaggerated—there was no kissing in the matter, and the defendant hath put the denial on record.—But what say you to his present practice, my lord, on the stage? for there lies the point, and not in any ways touching his former errors, in breaking parks, or the other follies you speak of."

"Why, truly, madam," replied Sussex, "as I said before, I wish the gamesome mad fellow no injury. Some of his whoreson poetry (I crave your Grace's pardon for such a phrase) has rung in mine ears as if the lines sounded to boot and saddle.—But then it is all froth and folly—no substance or seriousness in it, as your Grace has already well touched.—What are half a dozen knaves,

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with rusty foils and tattered targets, making but a mere mockery of a stout fight, to compare to the royal game of bear-baiting, which had been graced by your Highness's countenance, and that of your royal predecessors, in this your princely kingdom, famous for matchless mastiffs, and bold bearwards, over all Christendom? Greatly is it to be doubted that the race of both will decay, if men should throng to hear the lungs of an idle player belch forth nonsensical bombast, instead of bestowing their pence in encouraging the bravest image of war that can be shewn in peace, and that is the sports of the Bear-garden. There you may see the bear lying at guard with his red pinky eyes, watching the onset of the mastiff, like a wily captain, who maintains his defence that an assailant may be tempted to venture within his danger. And then comes Sir Mastiff, like a worthy champion, in full career at the throat of his adversary—and then shall Sir Bruin teach him the reward for those who, in their over-courage, neglect the policies of war, and, catching him in his arms, strain him to his breast like a lusty wrestler, until rib after rib crack like the shot of a pistolet. And then another mastiff, as bold, but with better aim and sounder judgment, catches Sir Bruin by the nether-lip, and hangs fast, while he tosses about his blood and slaver, and tries in vain to shake Sir Talbot from his hold. And then——"

"Nay, by my honour, my lord," said the Queen, laughing, "you have described the whole so admirably, that, had we never seen a bear-baiting, as we have beheld many, and hope, with Heaven's allowance, to see many more, your words were sufficient to put the whole Bear-garden before our eyes—But come, who speaks next in this case?—My Lord of Leicester, what say you?"

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"Am I then to consider myself as unmuzzled, please your Grace?" replied Leicester.

"Surely, my lord—that is, if you feel hearty enough to take part in our game," answered Elizabeth; "and yet, when I think of your cognizance of the bear and ragged staff, methinks we had better hear some less partial orator."

"Nay, on my word, gracious Princess," said the Earl, "though my brother Ambrose of Warwick and I do carry the ancient cognizance your Highness deigns to remember, I nevertheless desire nothing but fair play on all sides; or, as they say, 'fight dog, fight bear.' And in behalf of the players, I must needs say that they are witty knaves, whose rants and jests keep the minds of the commons from busying themselves with state affairs, and listening to traitorous speeches, idle rumours, and disloyal insinuations. When men are agape to see how Marlow, Shakspeare, and other play artificers, work out their fanciful plots, as they call them, the mind of the spectators is withdrawn from the conduct of their rulers."

"We would not have the mind of our subjects withdrawn from the consideration of our own conduct, my lord," answered Elizabeth; "because, the more closely it is examined, the true motives by which we are guided will appear the more manifest."

"I have heard, however, madam," said the Dean of St. Asaph's, an eminent Puritan, "that these players are wont, in their plays, not only to introduce profane and lewd expressions, tending to foster sin and harlotry, but even to bellow out such reflections on government, its origin and its object, as tend to render the subject discontented, and shake the solid foundations of civil society. And it seems to be, under your Grace's favour, far less

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than safe to permit these naughty foul-mouthed knaves to ridicule the godly for their decent gravity, and in blaspheming Heaven, and slandering its earthly rulers, to set at defiance the laws both of God and man."

"If we could think this were true, my lord," said Elizabeth, "we should give sharp correction for such offences. But it is ill arguing against the use of any thing from its abuse. And touching this Shakspeare, we think there is that in his plays that is worth twenty Bear-gardens; and that this new undertaking of his Chronicles, as he calls them, may entertain, with honest mirth, mingled with useful instruction, not only our subjects, but even the generation which may succeed to us."

"Your Majesty's reign will need no such feeble aid to make it remembered to the latest posterity," said Leicester. "And yet, in his way, Shakspeare hath so touched some incidents of your Majesty's happy government, as may countervail what has been spoken by his reverence the Dean of St. Asaph's. There are some lines, for example,—I would my nephew, Philip Sidney, were here, they are scarce ever out of his mouth—they are spoken in a mad tale of fairies, love-charms, and I wot not what besides; but beautiful they are, however short they may and must fall of the subject to which they bear a bold relation—and Philip murmurs them, I think, even in his dreams."

"You tantalize us, my lord," said the Queen—"Master Philip Sidney is, we know, a minion of the Muses, and we are pleased it should be so. Valour never shines to more advantage than when united with the true taste and love of letters. But surely there are some others among our young courtiers who can recollect what your lordship has forgotten amid weightier affairs.—Master Tressilian,

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you are described to me as a worshipper of Minerva—remember you aught of these lines?"

Tressilian's heart was too heavy, his prospects in life too fatally blighted, to profit by the opportunity which the Queen thus offered to him of attracting her attention, but he determined to transfer the advantage to his more ambitious young friend; and, excusing himself on the score of want of recollection, he added, that he believed the beautiful verses, of which my Lord of Leicester had spoken, were in the remembrance of Master Walter Raleigh.

At the command of the Queen, that cavalier repeated, with accent and manner which even added to their exquisite delicacy of tact and beauty of description, the celebrated vision of Oberon:—

> "That very time I saw, (but thou couldst not,)
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
> Cupid, all arm'd: a certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal, throned by the west;
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
> And the imperial vot'ress passed on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy free."

The voice of Raleigh, as he repeated the last lines, became a little tremulous, as if diffident how the Sovereign to whom the homage was addressed might receive it, exquisite as it was. If this diffidence was affected, it was good policy; but if real, there was little occasion for it. The verses were not probably new to the Queen, for when was ever such elegant flattery long in reaching the royal ear to which it was addressed? But they were not the less welcome when repeated by such a speaker as

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Raleigh. Alike delighted with the matter, the manner and the graceful form and animated countenance of the gallant young reciter, Elizabeth kept time to every cadence, with look and with finger. When the speaker had ceased, she murmured over the last lines as if scarce conscious that she was overheard, and as she uttered the words,

"In maiden meditation, fancy free,"

she dropt into the Thames the supplication of Orson Pinnit, keeper of the royal bears, to find more favourable acceptance at Sheerness, or wherever the tide might waft it.

Leicester was spurred to emulation by the success of the young courtier's exhibition, as the veteran racer is roused when a high-mettled colt passes him on the way. He turned the discourse on shows, banquets, pageants, and on the character of those by whom these gay scenes were then frequented. He mixed acute observation with light satire, in that just proportion which was free alike from malignant slander and insipid praise. He mimicked with ready accent the manners of the affected or the clownish, and made his own graceful tone and manner seem doubly such when he resumed it. Foreign countries—their customs—their manners—the rules of their courts—the fashions, and even the dress of their ladies, were equally his theme; and seldom did he conclude without conveying some compliment, always couched in delicacy, and expressed with propriety, to the Virgin Queen, her court, and her government. Thus passed the conversation during this pleasure voyage, seconded by the rest of the attendants upon the royal person, in gay discourse, varied by remarks upon ancient

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classics and modern authors, and enriched by maxims of deep policy and sound morality, by the statesmen and sages who sate around, and mixed wisdom with the lighter talk of a female court.

When they returned to the palace, Elizabeth accepted, or rather selected, the arm of Leicester, to support her, from the stairs where they landed, to the great gate. It even seemed to him, (though that might arise from the flattery of his own imagination,) that during this short passage, she leaned on him somewhat more than the slipperiness of the way necessarily demanded. Certainly her actions and words combined to express a degree of favour, which, even in his proudest days, he had not till then attained. His rival, indeed, was repeatedly graced by the Queen's notice; but it was in a manner that seemed to flow less from spontaneous inclination, than as extorted by a sense of his merit. And, in the opinion of many experienced courtiers, all the favour she shewed him, was overbalanced, by her whispering in the ear of the Lady Derby, that, "now she saw sickness was a better alchemist than she before wotted of, seeing it had changed my Lord of Sussex's copper nose into a golden one."

The jest transpired, and the Earl of Leicester enjoyed his triumph, as one to whom court favour had been both the primary and the ultimate motive of life, while he forgot, in the intoxication of the moment, the perplexities and dangers of his own situation. Indeed, strange as it may appear, he thought less at that moment of the perils arising from his secret union, than of the marks of grace which Elizabeth from time to time shewed to young Raleigh. They were indeed transient, but they were conferred on one accomplished in mind and body, with

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grace, gallantry, literature, and valour. An accident occurred in the course of the evening which riveted Leicester's attention to this object.

The nobles and courtiers who had attended the Queen on her pleasure expedition, were invited, with royal hospitality, to a splendid banquet in the hall of the palace. The table was not, indeed, graced by the presence of the Sovereign; for, agreeable to her idea of what was at once modest and dignified, the Maiden Queen, on such occasions, was wont to take in private, or with one or two favourite ladies, her light and temperate meal. After a moderate interval, the court again met in the splendid gardens of the palace; and it was while thus engaged, that the Queen suddenly asked a lady, who was near to her both in place and favour, what had become of the young Squire Lack-Cloak.

The Lady Paget answered, "She had seen Mr. Raleigh but two or three minutes since, standing at the window of a small pavilion or pleasure-house, which looked out on the Thames, and writing on the glass with a diamond ring."

"That ring," said the Queen, "was a small token I gave him, to make amends for his spoiled mantle. Come, Paget, let us see what use he has made of it, for I can see through him already. He is a marvellously sharp-witted spirit."

They went to the spot, within sight of which, but at some distance, the young cavalier still lingered, as the fowler watches the net which he has set. The Queen approached the window, on which Raleigh had used her gift to inscribe the following line:—

"Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall."

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The Queen smiled, read it twice over, once with deliberation to Lady Paget, and once again to herself. "It is a pretty beginning," she said, after the consideration of a moment or two; "but methinks the muse hath deserted the young wit, at the very outset of his task. It were good-natured—were it not, Lady Paget—to complete it for him? Try your rhyming faculties."

Lady Paget, prosaic from her cradle upwards, as ever any lady of the bedchamber before or after her, disclaimed all possibility of assisting the young poet.

"Nay, then, we must sacrifice to the Muses ourselves," said Elizabeth.

"The incense of no one can be more acceptable," said Lady Paget; "and your Highness will impose such obligation on the ladies of Parnassus——"

"Hush, Paget," said the Queen, "you speak sacrilege against the immortal Nine—yet, virgins themselves, they should be exorable to a Virgin Queen—and therefore—let me see how runs his verse—

'Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall.'

Might not the answer (for fault of a better) run thus—

If thy mind fail thee, do not climb at all."

The dame of honour uttered an exclamation of joy and surprise at so happy a termination; and certainly a worse has been applauded, even when coming from a less distinguished author.

The Queen, thus encouraged, took off a diamond ring, and saying, "We will give this gallant some cause of marvel, when he finds his couplet perfected without his own interference," she wrote her own line beneath that of Raleigh.

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The Queen left the pavilion—but retiring slowly, and often looking back, she could see the young cavalier steal, with the flight of a lapwing, towards the place where he had seen her make a pause;—"She staid but to observe," as she said, "that her train had taken;" and then, laughing at the circumstance with the Lady Paget, she took the way slowly towards the palace. Elizabeth, as they returned, cautioned her companion not to mention to any one the aid which she had given to the young poet—and Lady Paget promised scrupulous secrecy. It is to be supposed, that she made a mental reservation in favour of Leicester, to whom her ladyship transmitted without delay an anecdote, so little calculated to give him pleasure.

Raleigh, in the meanwhile, stole back to the window, and read, with a feeling of intoxication, the encouragement thus given him by the Queen in person to follow out his ambitious career, and returned to Sussex and his retinue, then on the point of embarking to go up the river, his heart beating high with gratified pride, and with hope of future distinction.

The reverence due to the person of the Earl prevented any notice being taken of the reception he had met with at court, until they had landed, and the household were assembled in the great hall at Say's Court; while that lord, exhausted by his late illness, and the fatigues of the day, had retired to his chamber, demanding the attendance of Wayland, his successful physician. Wayland, however, was nowhere to be found; and, while some of the party were, with military impatience, seeking him, and cursing his absence, the rest flocked around Raleigh, to congratulate him on his prospects of court favour.

He had the good taste and judgment to conceal the

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decisive circumstance of the couplet, to which Elizabeth had deigned to find a rhyme; but other circumstances had transpired which plainly intimated that he had made some progress in the Queen's favour. All hastened to wish him joy on the mended appearance of his fortune; some from real regard, some, perhaps, from hopes that his preferment might hasten their own; and most from a mixture of these motives, and a sense that the countenance shewn to any one of Sussex's household, was in fact a triumph to the whole. Raleigh returned the kindest thanks to them all, disowning, with becoming modesty, that one day's fair reception made a favourite, any more than one swallow a summer. But he observed that Blount did not join in the general congratulation, and, somewhat hurt at his apparent unkindness, he plainly asked him the reason.

Blount replied with equal sincerity—"My good Walter, I wish thee as well as do any of these chattering gulls, who are whistling and whooping gratulations in thine ear, because it seems fair weather with thee. But I fear for thee, Walter," (and he wiped his honest eye,) "I fear for thee with all my heart. These court tricks, and gambols, and flashes of fine women's favour, are the tricks and trinkets that bring fair fortunes to farthings, and fine faces and witty coxcombs to the acquaintance of dull block and sharp axes."

So saying, Blount arose and left the hall, while Raleigh looked after him with an expression that blanked for a moment his bold and animated countenance.

Stanley just then entered the hall, and said to Tressilian, "My lord is calling for your fellow Wayland, and your fellow Wayland is just come hither in a sculler, and is calling for you, nor will he go to my lord till he sees

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you. The fellow looks as he were mazed, methinks—I would you would see him immediately."

Tressilian instantly left the hall, and causing Wayland Smith to be shewn into a withdrawing apartment, and lights placed, he conducted the artist thither, and was surprised when he observed the emotion of his countenance.

"What is the matter with you, Smith?" said Tressilian; "have you seen the devil?"

"Worse, sir, worse," replied Wayland, "I have seen a basilisk.—Thank God, I saw him first, for being so seen, and seeing not me, he will do the less harm."

"In God's name, speak sense," said Tressilian, "and say what you mean!"

"I have seen my old master," said the artist—"last night, a friend whom I had acquired, took me to see the palace clock, judging me to be curious in such works of art. At the window of a turret next to the clock-house I saw my old master."

"Thou must have needs been mistaken," said Tressilian.

"I was not mistaken," said Wayland—"He that once hath his features by heart would know him amongst a million. He was anticly habited; but he cannot disguise himself from me, God be praised, as I can from him. I will not, however, tempt Providence by remaining within his ken. Tarleton the player himself could not so disguise himself, but that, sooner or later, Doboobie would find him out. I must away to-morrow; for, as we stand together, it were death to me to remain within reach of him."

"But the Earl of Sussex?" said Tressilian.

"He is in little danger from what he has hitherto

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taken, provided he swallow the matter of a bean's size of the Orvietan every morning fasting—but let him beware of a relapse."

"And how is that to be guarded against?" said Tressilian.

"Only by such caution as you would use against the devil," answered Wayland. "Let my lord's clerk of the kitchen kill his lord's meat himself, and dress it himself, using no spice but what he procures from the surest hands—Let the sewer serve it up himself, and let the master of my lord's household see that both clerk and sewer taste the dishes which the one dresses and the other serves. Let my lord use no perfumes which come not from well accredited persons; no unguents—no pomades. Let him, on no account, drink with strangers, or eat fruit with them, either in the way of nooning or otherwise. Especially, let him observe such caution if he goes to Kenilworth—the excuse of his illness, and his being under diet, will, and must, cover the strangeness of such practice."

"And thou," said Tressilian, "what dost thou think to make of thyself?"

"France, Spain, either India, East or West, shall be my refuge," said Wayland, "ere I venture my life by residing within ken of Doboobie, Demetrius, or whatever else he calls himself for the time."

"Well," said Tressilian, "this happens not inopportunely—I had business for you in Berkshire,—but in the opposite extremity to the place where thou art known; and ere thou hadst found out this new reason for living private, I had settled to send thee thither upon a secret embassage."

The artist expressed himself willing to receive his com

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mands, and Tressilian, knowing he was well acquainted with the outline of his business at court, frankly explained to him the whole, mentioned the agreement which subsisted betwixt Giles Gosling and him, and told what had that day been averred in the presence-chamber by Varney, and supported by Leicester.

"Thou seest," he added, "that, in the circumstances in which I am placed, it behoves me to keep a narrow watch on the motions of these unprincipled men, Varney and his complices, Foster and Lambourne, as well as on those of my Lord Leicester himself, who, I suspect, is partly a deceiver, and not altogether the deceived in that matter. Here is my ring, as a pledge to Giles Gosling—here is besides gold, which shall be trebled if thou serve me faithfully. Away down to Cumnor, and see what happens there."

"I go with double good-will," said the artist, "first, because I serve your honour, who has been so kind to me, and then, that I may escape my old master, who, if not an absolute incarnation of the devil, has, at least, as much of the demon about him, in will, word, and action, as ever polluted humanity.—And yet let him take care of me. I fly him now, as heretofore; but if, like the Scottish wild cattle,* I am vexed by frequent pursuit, I may turn on him in hate and desperation.—Will your honour command my nag to be saddled? I will but give the medicine to my lord, divided in its proper proportions, with a few instructions. His safety will then depend on the care of his friends and domestics

* A remnant of the wild cattle of Scotland are preserved at Chillingham Castle, near Wooler, in Northumberland, the seat of Lord Tankerville. They fly before strangers; but if disturbed and followed, they turn with fury on those who persist in annoying them.

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—for the past he is guarded, but let him beware of the future."

Wayland Smith accordingly made his farewell visit to the Earl of Sussex, dictated instructions as to his regimen, and precautions concerning his diet, and left Say's Court without waiting for morning.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

——————The moment comes—
It is already come—when thou must write
The absolute total of thy life's vast sum.
The constellations stand victorious o'er thee,
The planets shoot good fortune in fair junctions,
And tell thee, "Now's the time."

SCHILLER'S WALLENSTEIN, BY COLERIDGE.

WHEN Leicester returned to his lodging, after a day so important and so harassing, in which, after riding out more than one gale, and touching on more than one shoal, his bark had finally gained the harbour with banner displayed, he seemed to experience as much fatigue as a mariner after a perilous storm. He spoke not a word while his chamberlain exchanged his rich court-mantle for a furred night-robe, and when this officer signified that Master Varney desired to speak with his lordship, he replied only by a sullen nod. Varney, however, entered, accepting this signal as a permission, and the chamberlain withdrew.

The Earl remained silent and almost motionless in his chair, his head reclined on his hand, and his elbow resting upon the table which stood beside him, without seeming to be conscious of the entrance, or of the presence, of his confidant. Varney waited for some minutes until he should speak, desirous to know what was the finally predominant mood of a mind, through which so many power-

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ful emotions had that day taken their course. But he waited in vain, for Leicester continued still silent, and the confidant saw himself under the necessity of being the first to speak. "May I congratulate your lordship," he said, "on the deserved superiority you have this day attained over your most formidable rival?"

Leicester raised his head, and answered sadly, but without anger, "Thou, Varney, whose ready invention has involved me in a web of most mean and perilous falsehood, knowest best what small reason there is for gratulation on the subject."

"Do you blame me, my lord," said Varney, "for not betraying, on the first push, the secret on which your fortunes depended, and which you have so oft and so earnestly recommended to my safe keeping? Your lordship was present in person, and might have contradicted me and ruined yourself by an avowal of the truth; but surely it was no part of a faithful servant to have done so without your commands."

"I cannot deny it, Varney," said the Earl, rising and walking across the room; "my own ambition has been traitor to my love."

"Say rather, my lord, that your love has been traitor to your greatness, and barred you from such a prospect of honour and power as the world cannot offer to any other. To make my honoured lady a countess, you have missed the chance of being yourself——"

He paused and seemed unwilling to complete the sentence.

"Of being myself *what*?" demanded Leicester; "speak out thy meaning, Varney."

"Of being yourself a KING, my lord," replied Varney; "and King of England to boot!—It is no treason to our

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Queen to say so. It would have chanced by her obtaining that which all true subjects wish her—a lusty, noble, and gallant husband."

"Thou ravest, Varney," answered Leicester. "Besides, our times have seen enough to make men loathe the Crown Matrimonial which men take from their wives' lap. There was Darnley of Scotland."

"He!" said Varney; "a gull, a fool, a thrice sodden ass, who suffered himself to be fired off into the air like a rocket on a rejoicing day. Had Mary had the hap to have wedded the noble Earl, *once* destined to share her throne, she had experienced a husband of different metal; and her husband had found in her a wife as complying and loving as the mate of the meanest squire, who follows the hounds a-horseback, and holds her husband's bridle as he mounts."

"It might have been as thou sayest, Varney," said Leicester, a brief smile of self-satisfaction passing over his anxious countenance. "Henry Darnley knew little of women—with Mary, a man who knew her sex might have had some chance of holding his own. But not with Elizabeth, Varney—for I think God, when he gave her the heart of a woman, gave her the head of a man to control its follies.—No, I know her. She will accept love-tokens, ay, and requite them with the like—put sugared sonnets in her bosom,—ay, and answer them too—push gallantry to the very verge where it becomes exchange of affection—but she writes *nil ultra* to all which is to follow, and would not barter one iota of her own supreme power for all the alphabet of both Cupid and Hymen."

"The better for you, my lord," said Varney, "that is, in the case supposed, if such be her disposition; since you think you cannot aspire to become her husband. Her

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favourite you are, and may remain, if the lady at Cumnor-Place continues in her present obscurity."

"Poor Amy!" said Leicester, with a deep sigh; "she desires so earnestly to be acknowledged in presence of God and man!"

"Ay, but, my lord," said Varney, "is her desire reasonable?—that is the question.—Her religious scruples are solved—she is an honoured and beloved wife—enjoying the society of her husband at such times as his weightier duties permit him to afford her his company—What would she more? I am right sure that a lady so gentle and so loving would consent to live her life through in a certain obscurity—which is, after all, not dimmer than when she was at Lidcote Hall—rather than diminish the least jot of her lord's honours and greatness by a premature attempt to share them."

"There is something in what thou sayest," said Leicester; "and her appearance here were fatal—yet she must be seen at Kenilworth, Elizabeth will not forget that she has so appointed."

"Let me sleep on that point," said Varney; "I cannot else perfect the device I have on the stithy, which I trust will satisfy the Queen and please my honoured lady, yet leave this fatal secret where it is now buried.—Has your lordship farther commands for the night?"

"I would be alone," said Leicester, "Leave me, and place my steel casket on the table.—Be within summons."

Varney retired—and the Earl, opening the window of his apartment, looked out long and anxiously upon the brilliant host of stars which glimmered in the splendour of a summer firmament. The words burst from him as at unawares—"I had never more need that the heavenly

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bodies should befriend me, for my earthly path is darkened and confused."

It is well known that the age reposed a deep confidence in the vain predictions of judicial astrology, and Leicester, though exempt from the general control of superstition, was not in this respect superior to his time; but, on the contrary, was remarkable for the encouragement which he gave to the professors of this pretended science. Indeed, the wish to pry into futurity, so general among the human race, is peculiarly to be found amongst those who trade in state mysteries, and the dangerous intrigues and cabals of courts. With heedful precaution to see that it had not been opened, or its locks tampered with, Leicester applied a key to the steel casket, and drew from it, first, a parcel of gold pieces, which he put into a silk purse; then a parchment inscribed with planetary signs, and the lines and calculations used in framing horoscopes, on which he gazed intently for a few moments; and, lastly, took forth a large key, which, lifting aside the tapestry, he applied to a little concealed door in the corner of the apartment, and, opening it, disclosed a stair constructed in the thickness of the wall.

"Alasco," said the Earl, with a voice raised, yet no higher raised than to be heard by the inhabitant of the small turret to which the stair conducted—"Alasco, I say, descend."

"I come, my lord," answered a voice from above. The foot of an aged man was heard, slowly descending the narrow stair, and Alasco entered the Earl's apartment. The astrologer was a little man, and seemed much advanced in age, for his beard was long and white, and reached over his black doublet down to his silken girdle. His hair was of the same venerable hue. But his eye-

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brows were as dark as the keen and piercing black eyes which they shaded, and this peculiarity gave a wild and singular cast to the physiognomy of the old man. His cheek was still fresh and ruddy, and the eyes we have mentioned resembled those of a rat, in acuteness, and even fierceness of expression. His manner was not without a sort of dignity; and the interpreter of the stars, though respectful, seemed altogether at his ease, and even assumed a tone of instruction and command, in conversing with the prime favourite of Elizabeth.

"Your prognostications have failed, Alasco," said the Earl, when they had exchanged salutations—"He is recovering."

"My son," replied the astrologer, "let me remind you, I warranted not his death—nor is there any prognostication that can be derived from the heavenly bodies, their aspects and their conjunctions, which is not liable to be controlled by the will of Heaven. *Astra regunt homines, sed regit astra Deus.*"

"Of what avail, then, is your mystery?" inquired the Earl.

"Of much, my son," replied the old man, "since it can shew the natural and probable course of events, although that course moves in subordination to a Higher Power. Thus, in reviewing the horoscope which your lordship subjected to my skill, you will observe that Saturn, being in the sixth House in opposition to Mars, retrograde in the House of Life, cannot but denote long and dangerous sickness, the issue whereof is in the will of Heaven, though death may probably be inferred—Yet if I knew the name of the party, I would erect another scheme."

"His name is a secret," said the Earl; "yet, I must own thy prognostication hath not been unfaithful. He

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has been sick, and dangerously so, not however to death. But hast thou again cast my horoscope as Varney directed thee, and art thou prepared to say what the stars tell of my present fortune?"

"My art stands at your command," said the old man; "and here, my son, is the map of thy fortunes, brilliant in aspect as ever beamed from those blessed signs whereby our life is influenced, yet not unchequered with fears, difficulties, and dangers."

"My lot were more than mortal were it otherwise," said the Earl; "proceed, father, and believe you speak with one ready to undergo his destiny in action and in passion, as may beseem a noble of England."

"Thy courage to do and to suffer, must be wound up yet a strain higher," said the old man. "The stars intimate yet a prouder title, yet a higher rank. It is for thee to guess their meaning, not for me to name it."

"Name it, I conjure you—name it, I command you," said the Earl, his eyes brightening as he spoke.

"I may not, and I will not," replied the old man. "The ire of princes is as the wrath of the lion. But mark, and judge for thyself. Here Venus, ascendant in the House of Life, and conjoined with Sol, showers down that flood of silver light, blent with gold, which promises power, wealth, dignity, all that the proud heart of man desires, and in such abundance, that never the future Augustus of that old and mighty Rome heard from his *Haruspices* such a tale of glory, as from this rich text my lore might read to my favourite son."

"Thou dost but jest with me, father," said the Earl, astonished at the strain of enthusiasm in which the astrologer delivered his prediction.

"Is it for him to jest who hath his eye on heaven, who

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hath his foot in the grave?" returned the old man, solemnly.

The Earl made two or three strides through the apartment, with his hand outstretched, as one who follows the beckoning signal of some phantom, waving him on to deeds of high import. As he turned, however, he caught the eye of the astrologer fixed on him, while an observing glance of the most shrewd penetration shot from under the penthouse of his shaggy dark eyebrows. Leicester's haughty and suspicious soul at once caught fire; he darted towards the old man from the farther end of the lofty apartment, only standing still when his extended hand was within a foot of the astrologer's body.

"Wretch!" he said, "if you dare to palter with me, I will have your skin stripped from your living flesh!—Confess thou hast been hired to deceive and to betray me—that thou art a cheat, and I thy silly prey and booty!"

The old man exhibited some symptoms of emotion, but not more than the furious deportment of his patron might have extorted from innocence itself.

"What means this violence, my lord?" he answered, "or in what can I have deserved it at your hands?"

"Give me proof," said the Earl, vehemently, "that you have not tampered with mine enemies."

"My lord," replied the old man, with dignity, "you can have no better proof than that which you yourself elected. In that turret I have spent the last twenty-four hours, under the key which has been in your own custody. The hours of darkness I have spent in gazing on the heavenly bodies with these dim eyes, and during those of light I have toiled this aged brain to complete the calculation arising from their combinations. Earthly

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food I have not tasted—earthly voice I have not heard—you are yourself aware I had no means of doing so—and yet I tell you—I who have been thus shut up in solitude and study—that within these twenty-four hours your star has become predominant in the horizon, and either the bright book of heaven speaks false, or there must have been a proportionate revolution in your fortunes upon earth. If nothing has happened within that space to secure your power, or advance your favour, then am I indeed a cheat, and the divine art, which was first devised in the plains of Chaldea, is a foul imposture."

"It is true," said Leicester, after a moment's reflection, "thou wert closely immured—and it is also true that the change has taken place in my situation which thou sayest the horoscope indicates."

"Wherefore this distrust, then, my son?" said the astrologer, assuming a tone of admonition; "the celestial intelligences brook not diffidence, even in their favourites."

"Peace, father," answered Leicester, "I have erred in doubting thee. Not to mortal man, nor to celestial intelligence—under that which is supreme—will Dudley's lips say more in condescension or apology. Speak rather to the present purpose—Amid these bright promises, thou hast said there was a threatening aspect—Can thy skill tell whence, or by whose means, such danger seems to impend?"

"Thus far only," answered the astrologer, "does my art enable me to answer your query. The infortune is threatened by the malignant and adverse aspect, through means of a youth,—and, as I think, a rival; but whether in love or in prince's favour, I know not; nor can I give farther indication respecting him, save that he comes from the western quarter."

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"The western—ha!" replied Leicester, "it is enough —the tempest does indeed brew in that quarter!—Cornwall and Devon—Raleigh and Tressilian—one of them is indicated—I must beware of both—Father, if I have done thy skill injustice, I will make thee a lordly recompense."

He took a purse of gold from the strong casket which stood before him. "Have thou double the recompense which Varney promised.—Be faithful—be secret—obey the directions thou shalt receive from my master of the horse, and grudge not a little seclusion or restraint in my cause—it shall be richly considered.—Here, Varney—conduct this venerable man to thine own lodging—tend him heedfully in all things, but see that he holds communication with no one."

Varney bowed, and the astrologer kissed the Earl's hand in token of adieu, and followed the master of the horse to another apartment, in which were placed wine and refreshments for his use.

The astrologer sat down to his repast, while Varney shut two doors with great precaution, examined the tapestry, lest any listener lurked behind it; and then sitting down opposite to the sage, began to question him.

"Saw you my signal from the court beneath?"

"I did," said Alasco, for by such name he was at present called, "and shaped the horoscope accordingly."

"And it passed upon the patron without challenge?" continued Varney.

"Not without challenge," replied the old man, "but it did pass; and I added, as before agreed, danger from a discovered secret, and a western youth."

"My lord's fear will stand sponsor to the one, and his conscience to the other, of these prognostications," replied

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Varney. "Sure never man chose to run such a race as his, yet continued to retain those silly scruples! I am fain to cheat him to his own profit. But touching your matters, sage interpreter of the stars, I can tell you more of your own fortune than plan or figure can show. You must be gone from hence forthwith."

"I will not," said Alasco, peevishly. "I have been too much hurried up and down of late—immured for day and night in a desolate turret-chamber—I must enjoy my liberty, and pursue my studies, which are of more import than the fate of fifty statesmen, and favourites, that rise and burst like bubbles in the atmosphere of a court."

"At your pleasure," said Varney, with a sneer that habit had rendered familiar to his features, and which forms the principal characteristic which painters have assigned to that of Satan—"At your pleasure," he said; "you may enjoy your liberty and your studies until the daggers of Sussex's followers are clashing within your doublet, and against your ribs." The old man turned pale, and Varney proceeded. "Wot you not he hath offered a reward for the arch-quack and poison-vender, Demetrius, who sold certain precious spices to his lordship's cook?—What! turn you pale, old friend? Does Hali already see an infortune in the House of Life?—Why, hark thee, we will have thee down to an old house of mine in the country, where thou shalt live with a hob-nailed slave, whom thy alchemy may convert into ducats, for to such conversion alone is thy art serviceable."

"It is false, thou foul-mouthed railer," said Alasco, shaking with impotent anger; "it is well known that I have approached more nearly to projection than any hermetic artist who now lives. There are not six chemists

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in the world who possess so near an approximation to the grand arcanum——"

"Come, come," said Varney, interrupting him, "what means this, in the name of heaven? Do we not know one another? I believe thee to be so perfect—so very perfect in the mystery of cheating, that having imposed upon all mankind, thou hast at length, in some measure, imposed upon thyself; and without ceasing to dupe others, hast become a species of dupe to thine own imagination. Blush not for it, man—thou art learned, and shalt have classical comfort:—

'Ne quisquam Ajacem possit superare nisi Ajax.'

No one but thyself could have gulled thee—and thou hast gulled the whole brotherhood of the Rosy Cross beside—none so deep in the mystery as thou. But hark thee in thine ear; had the seasoning which spiced Sussex's broth wrought more surely, I would have thought better of the chemical science thou dost boast so highly."

"Thou art an hardened villain, Varney," replied Alasco; "many will do those things, who dare not speak of them."

"And many speak of them who dare not do them," answered Varney; "but be not wroth—I will not quarrel with thee—If I did, I were fain to live on eggs for a month, that I might feed without fear. Tell me at once, how came thine art to fail thee at this great emergency?"

"The Earl of Sussex's horoscope intimates," replied the astrologer, "that the sign of the ascendant being in combustion——"

"Away with your gibberish," replied Varney; "think'st thou it is the patron thou speak'st with?"

"I crave your pardon," replied the old man, "and swear to you, I know but one medicine that could have

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saved the Earl's life; and as no man living in England knows that antidote save myself, moreover, as the ingredients, one of them in particular, are scarce possible to be come by, I must needs suppose his escape was owing to such a constitution of lungs and vital parts, as was never before bound up in a body of clay."

"There was some talk of a quack who waited on him," said Varney, after a moment's reflection. "Are you sure there is no one in England who has this secret of thine?"

"One man there was," said the doctor, "once my servant, who might have stolen this of me, with one or two other secrets of art. But content you, Master Varney, it is no part of my policy to suffer such interlopers to interfere in my trade. He pries into no mysteries more, I warrant you; for, as I well believe, he hath been wafted to heaven on the wing of a fiery dragon—Peace be with him!—But in this retreat of mine, shall I have the use of mine elaboratory?"

"Of a whole workshop, man," said Varney: "for a reverend father Abbot, who was fain to give place to bluff King Hal and some of his courtiers, a score of years since, had a chemist's complete apparatus, which he was obliged to leave behind him to his successors. Thou shalt there occupy, and melt, and puff, and blaze, and multiply, until the Green Dragon become a golden-goose, or whatever the newer phrase of the brotherhood may testify."

"Thou art right, Master Varney," said the alchemist, setting his teeth close, and grinding them together—"thou art right even in thy very contempt of right and reason. For what thou sayest in mockery, may in sober verity chance to happen ere we meet again. If the most vener-

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able sages of ancient days have spoken the truth—if the most learned of our own have rightly received it—If I have been accepted wherever I travelled in Germany, in Poland, in Italy, and in the farther Tartary, as one to whom nature has unveiled her darkest secrets—If I have acquired the most secret signs and passwords of the Jewish Cabala, so that the grayest beard in the synagogue would brush the steps to make them clean for me—if all this is so, and if there remains but one step—one little step—betwixt my long, deep, and dark, and subterranean progress, and that blaze of light which shall shew Nature watching her richest and her most glorious productions in the very cradle—one step betwixt dependence and the power of sovereignty—one step betwixt poverty and such a sum of wealth as earth, without that noble secret, cannot minister from all her mines in the old or the new-found world—if this be all so, is it not reasonable that to this I dedicate my future life, secure, for a brief period of studious patience, to rise above the mean dependence upon favourites, and *their* favourites, by which I am now enthralled!"

"Now, bravo! bravo! my good father," said Varney, with the usual sardonic expression of ridicule on his countenance; "yet all this approximation to the philosopher's stone wringeth not one single crown out of my Lord Leicester's pouch, and far less out of Richard Varney's —*We* must have earthly and substantial services, man, and care not whom else thou canst delude with thy philosophical charlatanry."

"My son, Varney," said the alchemist, "the unbelief, gathered around thee like a frost-fog, hath dimmed thine acute perception to that which is a stumbling-block to the wise, and which yet, to him who seeketh knowledge with

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humility, extends a lesson so clear, that he who runs may read. Hath not Art, think'st thou, the means of completing Nature's imperfect concoctions in her attempts to form the precious metals, even as by art we can perfect those other operations, of incubation, distillation, fermentation, and similar processes of an ordinary description, by which we extract life itself out of a senseless egg, summon purity and vitality out of muddy dregs, or call into vivacity the inert substance of a sluggish liquid?"

"I have heard all this before," said Varney, "and my heart is proof against such cant ever since I sent twenty good gold pieces, (marry, it was in the nonage of my wit,) to advance the grand magisterium, all which, God help the while, vanished *in fumo*. Since that moment, when I paid for my freedom, I defy chemistry, astrology, palmistry, and every other occult art, were it as secret as hell itself, to unloose the stricture of my purse-strings. Marry, I neither defy the manna of Saint Nicholas, nor can I dispense with it. Thy first task must be to prepare some when thou getst down to my little sequestered retreat yonder, and then make as much gold as thou wilt."

"I will make no more of that dose," said the alchemist resolutely.

"Then," said the master of the horse, "thou shalt be hanged for what thou hast made already, and so were the great secret for ever lost to mankind.—Do not humanity this injustice, good father, but e'en bend to thy destiny, and make us an ounce or two of this same stuff, which cannot prejudice above one or two individuals, in order to gain life-time to discover the universal medicine, which shall clear away all mortal diseases at once. But cheer up, thou grave, learned, and most melancholy jackanape!

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Hast thou not told me, that a moderate portion of thy drug hath mild effects, no ways ultimately dangerous to the human frame, but which produces depression of spirits, nausea, headache, an unwillingness to change of place—even such a state of temper as would keep a bird from flying out of a cage, were the door left open?"

"I have said so, and it is true," said the alchemist; "this effect will it produce, and the bird who partakes of it in such proportion, shall sit for a season drooping on her perch, without thinking either of the free blue sky, or of the fair greenwood, though the one be lighted by the rays of the rising sun, and the other ringing with the newly-awakened song of all the feathered inhabitants of the forest."

"And this without danger to life?" said Varney, somewhat anxiously.

"Ay, so that proportion and measure be not exceeded; and so that one who knows the nature of the manna be ever near to watch the symptoms, and succour in case of need."

"Thou shalt regulate the whole," said Varney; "thy reward shall be princely, if thou keep'st time and touch, and exceedest not the due proportion, to the prejudice of her health—otherwise thy punishment shall be as signal."

"The prejudice of *her* health!" repeated Alasco; "it is, then, a woman I am to use my skill upon?"

"No, thou fool," replied Varney; "said I not it was a bird—a reclaimed linnet, whose pipe might soothe a hawk when in mid stoop?—I see thine eye sparkle, and I know thy beard is not altogether so white as art has made it—*that*, at least, thou hast been able to transmute to silver. But mark me, this is no mate for

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thee. This caged bird is dear to one who brooks no rivalry, and far less such rivalry as thine, and her health must over all things be cared for. But she is in the case of being commanded down to yonder Kenilworth revels; and it is most expedient—most needful—most necessary, that she fly not thither. Of these necessities and their causes, it is not needful that she should know aught, and it is to be thought that her own wish may lead her to combat all ordinary reasons which can be urged for her remaining a housekeeper."

"That is but natural," said the alchemist, with a strange smile, which yet bore a greater reference to the human character, than the uninterested and abstracted gaze which his physiognomy had hitherto expressed, where all seemed to refer to some world distant from that which was existing around him.

"It is so," answered Varney; "you understand women well, though it may have been long since you were conversant amongst them.—Well, then, she is not to be contradicted—yet she is not to be humoured. Understand me—a slight illness, sufficient to take away the desire of removing from thence, and to make such of your wise fraternity as may be called in to aid, recommend a quiet residence at home, will, in one word, be esteemed good service, and remunerated as such."

"I am not to be asked to affect the House of Life?" said the chemist.

"On the contrary, we will have thee hanged if thou dost," replied Varney.

"And I must," added Alasco, "have opportunity to do my turn, and all facilities for concealment or escape, should there be detection?"

"All, all, and every thing, thou infidel in all but the

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impossibilities of alchemy.—Why, man, for what dost thou take me?"

The old man rose, and, taking a light, walked towards the end of the apartment, where was a door that led to the small sleeping-room destined for his reception during the night.—At the door he turned round, and slowly repeated Varney's question ere he answered it. "For what do I take thee, Richard Varney?—Why, for a worse devil than I have been myself. But I am in your toils, and I must serve you till my term be out."

"Well, well," answered Varney, hastily, "be stirring with gray light. It may be we shall not need thy medicine—Do nought till I myself come down—Michael Lambourne shall guide you to the place of your destination." *

* The Earl of Leicester's Italian physician, Julio, was affirmed by his contemporaries to be a skilful compounder of poisons, which he applied with such frequency, that the Jesuit Parsons extols ironically the marvellous good luck of this great favourite, in the opportune deaths of those who stood in the way of his wishes. There is a curious passage on the subject:—

"Long after this, he fell in love with the Lady Sheffield, whom I signified before, and then also had he the same fortune to have her husband dye quickly, with an extreame rheume in his head, (as it was given out,) but as others say of an artificiall catarre that stopped his breath.

"The like good chance had he in the death of my Lord of Essex, (as I have said before,) and that at a time most fortunate for his purpose; for when he was coming home from Ireland, with intent to revenge himselfe upon my Lord of Leicester for begetting his wife with childe in his absence, (the childe was a daughter, and brought up by the Lady Shandoes, W. Knooles his wife,) my Lord of Leicester hearing thereof, wanted not a friend or two to accompany the deputy, as among other a couple of the Earles own servants, Crompton, (if I misse not his name,) yeoman of his bottles, and Lloid his secretary, entertained afterward by my Lord of Leicester, and so he dyed in the way, of an extreame flux, caused by an Italian receipe, as all his

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When Varney heard the adept's door shut and carefully bolted within, he stepped towards it, and with similar precaution carefully locked it on the outside, and took the key from the lock, muttering to himself, "Worse than *thee*, thou poisoning quacksalver and witchmonger, who, if thou art not a bounden slave to the devil, it is only because he disdains such an apprentice! I am

friends are well assured, the maker whereof was a chyrurgeon (as it is beleeved) that then was newly come to my Lord from Italy,—a cunning man and sure in operation, with whom, if the good Lady had been sooner acquainted, and used his help, she should not have needed to sitten so pensive at home, and fearefull of her husband's former returne out of the same country . . . . . Neither must you marvaile though all these died in divers manners of outward diseases, for this is the excellency of the Italian art, for which this chyrurgian and Dr. Julio were entertained so carefully, who can make a man dye in what manner or show of sickness you will—by whose instructions, no doubt; but his lordship is now cunning, especially adding also to these the counsell of his Doctor Bayly, a man also not a little studied (as he seemeth) in his art; for I heard him once myselfe, in a publique act in Oxford, and that in presence of my Lord of Leicester, (if I be not deceived,) maintain that poyson might be so tempered and given as it should not appear presently, and yet should kill the party afterward, at what time should be appointed; which argument belike pleased well his lordship, and therefore was chosen to be discussed in his audience, if I be not deceived of his being that day present. So, though one dye of a flux, and another of a catarre, yet this importeth little to the matter, but showeth rather the great cunning and skill of the artificer."—PARSON'S *Leicester's Commonwealth*, p. 23.

It is unnecessary to state the numerous reasons why the Earl is stated in the tale to be rather the dupe of villains than the unprincipled author of their atrocities. In the latter capacity, which a part at least of his contemporaries imputed to him, he would have made a character too disgustingly wicked, to be useful for the purposes of fiction.

I have only to add, that the union of the poisoner, the quacksalver, the alchymist, and the astrologer, in the same person, was familiar to the pretenders to the mystic sciences.

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a mortal man, and seek by mortal means the gratification of my passions and advancement of my prospects—Thou art a vassal of hell itself.—So ho, Lambourne!" he called at another door, and Michael made his appearance with a flushed cheek and an unsteady step.

"Thou art drunk, thou villain!" said Varney to him.

"Doubtless, noble sir," replied the unabashed Michael, "we have been drinking all even to the glories of the day, and to my noble Lord of Leicester, and his valiant master of the horse.—Drunk! odds blades and poniards, he that would refuse to swallow a dozen healths on such an evening, is a base besognio, and a puckfoist, and shall swallow six inches of my dagger!"

"Hark ye, scoundrel," said Varney, "be sober on the instant—I command thee. I know thou canst throw off thy drunken folly, like a fool's coat, at pleasure; and if not, it were the worse for thee."

Lambourne drooped his head, left the apartment, and returned in two or three minutes, with his face composed, his hair adjusted, his dress in order, and exhibiting as great a difference from his former self as if the whole man had been changed.

"Art thou sober now, and dost thou comprehend me?" said Varney, sternly.

Lambourne bowed in acquiescence.

Thou must presently down to Cumnor-Place with the reverend man of art, who sleeps yonder in the little vaulted chamber. Here is the key, that thou mayest call him by times. Take another trusty fellow with you. Use him well on the journey, but let him not escape you—pistol him if he attempt it, and I will be your warrant. I will give thee letters to Foster. The doctor is to occupy

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the lower apartments of the eastern quadrangle, with freedom to use the old elaboratory and its implements.—He is to have no access to the lady but such as I shall point out—only she may be amused to see his philosophical jugglery. Thou wilt await at Cumnor-Place my farther orders; and, as thou livest, beware of the ale-bench and the aquavitæ flask. Each breath drawn in Cumnor-Place must be kept severed from common air."

"Enough, my Lord—I mean my worshipful master—soon, I trust, to be my worshipful knightly master. You have given me my lesson and my license; I will execute the one, and not abuse the other. I will be in the saddle by daybreak."

"Do so, and deserve favour.—Stay—ere thou goest fill me a cup of wine—not out of that flask, sirrah,"—as Lambourne was pouring out from that which Alasco had left half finished, "fetch me a fresh one."

Lambourne obeyed, and Varney, after rinsing his mouth with the liquor, drank a full cup, and said, as he took up a lamp, to retreat to his sleeping apartment, "It is strange—I am as little the slave of fancy as any one, yet I never speak for a few minutes with this fellow Alasco, but my mouth and lungs feel as if soiled with the fumes of calcined arsenic—pah!"

So saying, he left the apartment. Lambourne lingered, to drink a cup of the freshly opened flask. "It is from Saint-John's-Berg," he said, as he paused on the draught to enjoy its flavour, "and has the true relish of the violet. But I must forbear it now, that I may one day drink it at my own pleasure." And he quaffed a goblet of water to quench the fumes of the Rhenish wine, retired slowly towards the door, made a pause, and then, finding the temptation irresistible, walked hastily back, and took

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another long pull at the wine flask, without the formality of a cup.

"Were it not for this accursed custom," he said, "I might climb as high as Varney himself. But who can climb when the room turns round with him like a parish-top? I would the distance were greater, or the road rougher, betwixt my hand and mouth!—But I will drink nothing to-morrow save water—nothing save fair water."

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